10 A Note on the Door: Symbolic Erasure and Representational Resistance in Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

The chapter draws on the complex realities of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to explore the various forms of representational resistance enacted by residents. These forms of resistance respond to over a century of representational and material violence enacted on what are often described as 'informal' urban development. Most recently, the authors turn to the last 20 years that saw the intersection of favela upgrade programmes and militarised securitisation policies that hold the aim to integrate and pacify these territories in the service of a neoliberal mega-event driven city. Tracing the roots of symbolic erasure to the colonial legacies of forced removal and urban cleansing, and to the social and spatial control of favelas in the 20th century, we introduce contemporary cases of organised groups in favelas who are exercising ways to assert citizenship and the right to sovereignty. These insurgent practices include peace marches, collective meetings, writing manifestos, co-designing plans and policy advocacy campaigns with the aim of interrupting the state's continued necropolitical agenda.

10.1 A Note on the Door

In late January 2022, residents from Jacarezinho, a favela located on the north side of Rio de Janeiro,[1] left notes and signs on their doors asking the police authorities not to invade their homes.[2] Images of the notes published in *Voz das comunidades*, a community-led online newspaper, show them to be handwritten in pen, highlighters and markers. In the series of notes shown from one resident, the words inform the intended audience (of a police or military on duty) of their identities (single mother and son), of their jobs (clinician and security work) and of their working hours. The note uses polite and insistent language in efforts to demonstrate a moral character to a state entity in the only way they know they can – the presence of writing. This is but one way that favela residents attempt to make a claim that they are not criminals nor involved with drug dealing, hence demanding respect and a dignified treatment. These notes depict what we are terming representational resistance. They are a mode of emergent citizenship that attempts to make a formal claim to the state in representational value and therefore to be made legitimate with legal guarantees enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution. However, they are also informal in their materiality and temporality. Despite their claim being entered into the written form, their representational aesthetic is far from what might be imagined as legal, formal registers of sovereignty in the face of policies carrying a 'violent and punitive character by the

[1] From here on, we will refer to the city of Rio de Janeiro by the shorthand Rio. If we refer to the State of Rio de Janeiro, we will make that clear.

[2] An article from the community-led newspaper *Voz das comunidades* published images of the signs and notes as well as of cases of home invasions in Jacarezinho. See: https://www.vozdascomunidades.com.br/destaques/com-medo-de-invasoes-de-pms-moradores-do-jacarezinho-colocam-bilhetes-nas-portas-explicando-suas-profissoes/.

police and judicial bodies', as noted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH 2021, 12).

Stories like this are more common than not. In 2019, a local organisation based in Maré, a compound of 16 favelas also in the north side of Rio, collected 1,509 letters from children, adolescents and young people 'expressing the feeling of those who live in the midst of armed violence in that territory' (Redes da Maré 2022). The letters were delivered to the Conselho Nacional do Ministério Público (National Council of Prosecutors) with the goal to reduce the harm of police operations.[3] What can be said of these acts of writing, drawing and other forms of representational resistance? The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights highlighted the consequences of institutional violence to be devastating to families, 'affecting communities' social fabric', engendering 'a culture of violence' in which citizens do not trust state institutions (CIDH 2021, 119). Since 2019, the modalities of law enforcement in Rio[4] follow the rationale of what Ananya Roy and Raquel Rolnik term with specific reference to the case of the Brazilian state, the 'alternate strategies of control and containment with actions of violent destruction and even death' (2020, 23). In their comparative project on housing justice that presents new research methodologies across a range of global cases including Brazilian cities and Los Angeles, Roy and Rolnik write of these formal conditions of state law as 'putting [residents] in a permanent state of spatial illegality and disenfranchisement' (2020, 23).

[3] The project of letters 'Cartas da Maré' has been documented in the Bulletin of Public Security, organised and edited by members of the organisation Redes da Maré (2019, 20–23).

[4] Rede de observatórios de Segurança. "Operações policiais no Rio: mais frequentes, mais letais, mais assustadoras". Rede de observatórios de Segurança. Accessed April 8, 2022.

The question of permanence in relation to spatial illegality, or modes of what much of the literature hold as a primary definition of urban informality – that is the holding of legal property tenure or not (Macedo 2008; Van Gelder 2009; Wu et al. 2013; Wahab and Agbola 2017) – is key to the case of Rio (Banks et al. 2020). Unable to shift the spatial organisation of urban life in terms of property, favela residents resist their representational 'illegality'. In this chapter we refer to this resistance as antagonistic to a long term process of symbolic erasure, and as working towards new modes of presence and presencing in the city. The handwritten notes reveal the nature of human rights violations in favelas,[5] and can be understood as but one impermanent, pleading gesture within a networking system of social movements contributing to the symbolic presence of favelas in the past, present and future of Rio. This is not to make light or academically theorise the real violence of having to make claims of subjecthood and sovereignty in the face of police violence across favelas in Rio (Magaloni et al. 2020), but rather to be confronted by the multitude of formal informalities constituting new social and political resistances in these places.

Repressive behaviours of material and symbolic erasure are integral to the history of Rio's favelas. This was particularly evident during the national military dictatorship between 1964 and 1985, when favela residents faced abuse, home demolition, dispossession and displacement (Brum 2019). Over the past 20 years, the aim to pacify and control favelas formed part of a larger economic, political and urban policy geared towards the development of a mega-event-

[5] For a detailed account of the human rights violations stemming from the use of law enforcement in favelas, see the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights report released in 2021.

driven city. These policy imperatives incited and legitimised new forms of material and symbolic erasure now equipped with technologies of surveillance and advanced weapons (Machado da Silva and Menezes 2019).[6] These policies included the integration of specific favelas to the 'formal' city through urbanisation programmes (Landesman 2016) and public security initiatives to pacify these territories, using coercive and militarised strategies of patrol 'allegedly to guarantee urban order' (Silva 2016, 56). In addition to the material and symbolic erasures enacted on the favelas, their history also highlights what Cavalcanti terms a 'grammar of social control of the favelas' (2013, 194) sustained by the exercise of necropolitics. Necropolitics here relying on the definition provided by Achille Mbembe as referring to an expression of sovereignty that defines who matters and who does not, limiting who should die and who should keep living (2003, 14). It is, in Mbembe's words, a project of sovereignty whose aim is 'not the struggle for autonomy but the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations' (2003, 14). A note on the door becomes a 'specific exercise of sovereignty', as posed by Mariana Cavalcanti (2013, 193), against the dominant sovereign force of the necropolitical and its material, symbolic and bodily erasure in Rio's favelas. In this chapter we focus specifically on the processes of reclaiming symbolic presence by favela residents in the urban imaginary of Rio, observing the forms in which these acts are carried out to resist material and symbolic erasure. The historical legacy of state militarisation in Rio left a series of symbolic erasures, not always materially visible but

[6] See: Dossiê do Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro 2014, p. 106–108.

rather embodied by residents and their lived experiences.[7] These forms of symbolic erasures reside in the long history of favela residents not being recognised as citizens living in legitimate spaces (Silva 2002, 2016; Holston 2008).

The historic violence against favelas and their residents was formalised into law at the turn of the millennium. This came in the form of the Law and Order Assurance (GLO) which gave the military temporary police powers and came into power first in 1999, then again in 2001 during the second Presidential term of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The law, which can only be enacted through Presidential decree, has been used primarily in 'the use of troops in state government pacification operations in different communities in Rio de Janeiro' and 'at the 2014 World Cup and the Rio 2016 Olympic Games' according to the national government's own site.[8] The GLO is a predecessor of the State of Rio de Janeiro's own efforts to legalise police operations in the favelas through the creation of the *Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora* (UPP) or 'Pacifying Police

[7] Eliana Sousa Silva explores the contours of urban violence observed in popular spaces, addressing the histories behind the repressive character of law enforcement, especially in favelas' territories. See: E. S. Silva, *Maré Testimonies* (Rio de Janeiro: Mórula, 2016) 55–57.

[8] The Law and Order Assurance (GLO – Garantia da Lei e da Ordem) is a federal act carried out in cases where there is a reduction of traditional public security forces in situations of serious disruption of order. It is written in Article 142, by Complementary Law 97, of 1999 and by Decree 3897, of 2001. GLO operations provisionally grant the military the faculty to act with police power until order is restored. More available at: https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/assuntos/exercicios-e-operacoes/garantia-da-lei-e-da-ordem. Accessed on March 3, 2022.

Unit'.[9] Begun in 2008 in the favela of Santa Marta, the UPP expanded rapidly to create state presence across multiple territories in Rio in advance of the 2016 Olympic Games (Franco 2014). Official statistics posit lethal deaths at the hands of the State of Rio de Janeiro at over 41,000 since 2014 (Instituto de Segurança Pública 2022).[10] Their spatialisation of these deaths in the metropolitan region largely correlates to the spatialisation of favelas in Rio. According to the *Monitor Fuerza Letal 2022* report, during the pandemic in 2020, the Justice Supreme Court prohibited police raids, revealing a reduction of 31% in the number of deaths by lethal violence in comparison to the year before (2022, 43). Insofar as favelas' leaderships, representatives and associations fight to change this scenario of material and bodily erasure through policy advocacy and other modes of insurgent citizenship, symbolic erasure remains (Miraftab 2017).One of the prevailing narratives about favelas and their inhabitants linked to the notion of symbolic erasure is that favelas are defined by absence: the absence of public services, of infrastructure, of security and of regulation (Silva 2002). While there certainly may be forms of material and infrastructural inequity evidenced by the spatial conditions of favelas, on the ground, absence also appears in the forms of symbolic erasure where there is a removal of residents' rights to have dignity, autonomy, agency to determine their lives, to have freedom, self-representation and, ultimately, to be alive. With that in mind, this chapter explores the historic forms of

[9] For an in -depth analysis of the UPP in Rio de Janeiro, See Moraes et al. (2015) and Müller (2018).

[10] To put this statistic into perspective, at the time of writing this is an average of 5125 deaths per year, or about 14 deaths per day, every day for the past eight years by police or military at the State level in Rio de Janeiro.

symbolic erasure in favelas within a dimension of informality that legitimises human rights violations and affects the lived experiences of residents. Second, we examine a series of citizen-led initiatives that work in the present to counter this symbolic erasure where residents work collectively to support claims of sovereignty within a necropolitical arena. The remainder of this chapter, then, is organised in two parts: (1) the context of urbanisation and militarisation of Rio de Janeiro and the legacies of a (failed) mega-event city; (2) case studies from residents groups within various favelas in Rio demonstrating 'specific exercises of sovereignty' (Cavalcanti 2013, 193) and activism to promote symbolic presence across the informal and formal registers of urban life.

10.2 From Material to Symbolic Erasure

The history of the favela in Rio begins with the late 19th century national projects to remove the *cortiços* (tenements) in the central and port zones and relocate people to the suburbs (Vaz 1994; Chalhoub 1996). As related by Teresa A. Meade, in Rio "Health Inspector Souza Lima captured the prevailing sentiments of the elite when in 1891 he called for the destruction of the *cortiços* "in the interest of freeing the central city from vice and visible poverty" (2010, 74). The relationship between presence and absence in the city predates the 1902 urban regeneration projects in Rio that centred on the displacement and disenfranchisement of the poor and were justified through prevailing economic, sanitary and moral arguments. Still this moment in the late 19th century marks a step-change in that the material removal of the *cortiços*, of housing for the poor and therefore of the poor from the centre of Rio, correlates to the formation of the first favela in the city. The various policies passed into law to secure the material erasure of housing for the poor in Rio that displaced some 25% of the city's population at the time occurs at

the same time as the first occupation of land by new migrants to the city, coming with the promises of work and housing (Freeman 2020, 274). Material erasure is met with material resistance.

Dating from 1897, the Morro da Favella, today known as Providência, was one of the first strategic land occupations in the history of Rio by a collective, here by soldiers returning from the battle of Canudos in Bahia State, who were pressuring the Ministry of War for payment (Valladares 2005, 19). Gradually and through necessity, the group of self-built shacks by the veterans extended to occupy more and more adjacent land without a street plan or access to public service infrastructure like water or sewage. Original residents of the Morro da Favella were joined by new migrants to the city from the Northeast of Brazil and from freed slaves migrating to cities across the country marking the new form of the favela as an entry point to a city without accessible or affordable housing options. Although other hill occupations took place in the same period, it was the Morro da Favella that gained recognition in the city's physical and representational history, giving its name to this particular form of settlement. Anthropologist Lícia Valladares, in her book *The Invention of the Favela* (2005), offers two histories of this namesake. The first and most common is that Morro da Favella was named after the *planta favela,* a type of vegetation found on the hill in Rio that resembled vegetation in the region of Bahia where they were fighting. The second possibility has deeper significance. Valladares suggests that the name could have emerged in relation to the fierce resistance met by the army of the Republic at the hill of favela plants in Bahia and so adopting this name for its 'powerful symbolic connotation that suggests resistance, the struggle of the oppressed against a powerful and dominating adversary' (2005, 19). The history of the namesake of favela itself points to enduring symbolic conflicts over the representation of these sites then and now.

In the early 20th century, popular media and the elites in government laboured to cement one representational narrative of the favelas. As an early example, Valladares highlights a newspaper article from *Jornal do Brasil* in 1900 which proclaimed favelas to be 'infested with vagrants and criminals that are shocking to families' (2005, 16). The representational history of favelas marked them as spaces to be combated, forming over time the basis of an ideology foregrounding the necessity of removal and operationalised as urban policies that favoured a relationship of control and cleansing. Historians of favelas recount how this ideology has been implemented throughout the 20th century, materially through the constant removal and displacement of residents and symbolically in the consciousness of society who internalised the oft repeated belief that favelas and their residents were a plague or disease to be cured through eradication (Abreu 1994; Vaz 1994; Valladares 2000; Brum 2019). In reality, the majority of *favelados* (a popular term for residents of favelas) were formerly enslaved people and their descendants and people from the Northeast of Brazil who came to work in Rio's various industries and infrastructure projects during the city's modernisation from the 1930s onwards. Most of these new migrants were racialised within the prevailing legal conditions of white supremacy settler colonialism in Brazil at the time, and most were illiterate and poor, hence precluded from voting or accessing land ownership (Martins 1981; Holston 2008, 100–102). For nearly 80 years after the founding of the first favela, various governments deployed a national policy of control, containment and erasure. Whether the justification was around beautification, sanitation and contagion, vice and mortality, or often all three, favelas became the material and symbolic site of the 'other' in a Brazilian public sphere where their presence was argued (and argued successfully) to threaten the entirety of a social order (Valladares 2005). Forms of physical erasure – in other words, the relentless official demolition of shacks and

houses in favelas – were present in residents' daily lives and were part of official urban planning policies until the 1980s. The most notorious series of evictions and demolitions took place during the Governorship of the State of Guanabara[11] by Carlos Lacerda in the 1960s, and following the beginning of the dictatorship in Brazil in 1964 through the 1970s. James Freeman cites historian Rafael Soares Gonçalves who offers this tally of the state-forced displacement during Lacerda's time in office: 'the final tally of the Lacerda government in this account was the removal of approximately 42,000 people, the demolition of 8078 shacks and the total or partial eradication of 27 favelas between 1962 and 1965' (2020, 275). Freeman continues that with the military coup in 1964, Lacerda's 'pilot project' was scaled up into a national policy through the creation of the National Housing Bank and financed by workers' own funds by a new national pension scheme – the FGTS (2020, 275). In Rio, the result of these national policies was the '[removal of] over 100 favelas, destroying more than 100,000 dwellings and leaving at least half a million poor people without their homes' (Perlman 2010, 271) all between 1968–1975. Unsurprisingly from a standpoint of capital accumulation by dispossession, the removals targeted highly valued land for development in the city's southern zone. From the eradication of the *cortiços* to the state-mandated demolition and forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, the late 19th and majority of the 20th century in Rio saw formal urban policies created to control

[11] Essentially the boundaries of what are now the municipality of Rio de Janeiro and the location of Brazil's capital until 1975. See: M. Brum, "Breve História das Favelas Cariocas – das origens aos Grandes Eventos". In *O Rio (Re)visto de suas margens*, edited by R. Maia, 108–135 (Rio de Janeiro: Letra Capital, 2019) 123.

favelas with repressive measures, in some cases even burning them to the ground (Perlman 1976).

In the 1980s, new strategies of urbanisation at national and local levels reframed the discourse around favelas' away from removal towards integration in the city. As debated by Brum (2019, 123), this moment is marked by the arrival of a re-democratisation, largely brought about through the presence of long term community movements of favela residents in the political sphere. As much as these urban integration programmes like Projeto Rio, Favela Bairro PAC, Morar Carioca and MCMV shifted the language of policy approaches from one of eradication to one of integration, the rift between the favela and the *asfalto* (the name for the formally urbanised parts of the city – literally 'the asphalt' or 'pavement') grew exponentially (Cavalcanti 2013). Notwithstanding, the rise of armed groups and drug trafficking in these spaces produced another layer of representation within which favelas have been flattened into a language of violence and war. The criminalisation of entire territories under the metaphor of a 'war on drugs' (Silva 2017) legitimised the control over their space, and had the consequence of criminalising economic activities, leisure and daily interactions in favelas.

One example provided by Eliana Silva (2016), a leader from the Maré favela was the shift in the organisation and the meaning of the *bailes funk* or funk balls – a term for street parties and gatherings emerging in the 1980s onwards, and characterised by a nascent form of musical innovation called *funk carioca*. Initially organised by residents for leisure and as a form of income, these balls became the representational targets of symbolic erasure through a series of laws at the State of Rio level from 1999 to 2009 that sought to outlaw these cultural practices (Sneed 2008; Lippman 2019; Gilsing 2020). Claiming them to be illegal activities full of crime, violence, pornography and vice (familiar tropes to the language used in the late 19th and early

20th centuries by elites looking to 'eradicate' the *cortiços*), these laws had the result of increasing the presence of armed groups who continued to run the balls, thus perpetuating the association between the cultural life of favelas with crime.

It is not without intention that we highlight the development of new forms of urban-planning led favela integration programmes in the early 2000s along with the legal attempts to prohibit the cultural life of them in the form of laws against the *bailes funk*. This dual aspect of the material reorganisation of favelas along with the continued counter-cultural attacks on the life of the favela signals the rise of neoliberal development policies seeking the symbolic erasure through containment and integration. The circumstances that reproduced the public imaginaries of favelas as informal and excluded from the status of being part of the city continued in the late 1990s and 2000s. Researchers have highlighted the negative impacts of the discontinuity of urban development plans and programmes (Ximenes and Jaesnich 2020), the selective choice of which favelas to integrate (Brum 2019), the enormous costs of large scale infrastructure like the three-stop gondola in Providência prioritised over water or sewage infrastructure (Freire-Medeiros and Name 2017) and public security policies to pacify and control favelas in the name of combating crime (Cavalcanti 2013). Each of these highlights symptoms of the continued stigmatisation of favelas in Rio in the 21st century as a problem to be solved (Silva 2002).

The institutionalisation of urbanisation policies in favelas is publicly legitimised as a response to the territorial domination by drug traffickers (Cavalcanti 2013). The combination of neoliberal urbanisation policies and urban militarisation created an arms race between police authorities and armed groups and in 2017, a decade after the introduction of the UPPs, the number of violent deaths in the state approached the numbers registered before their introduction. The consequences of this hyper and publicly mediatised militarisation of the favelas changed their

representation from the ‘language of rights’ to a ‘language of urban violence’ (Machado da Silva and Menezes 2019, 531). Citizens resist abuses inside the favelas and in the process lose neighbours, friends and family members to shootings. Their autonomy is restricted by the constant surveillance of armed groups, of police authorities and even of the army – which is the current case in favelas such as Maré and the Complexo do Alemão (Silva 2017; CIDH 2021). Still, in the face of nearly 150 years of attempts to materially and symbolically erase *favelados* and their homes, neighbourhoods, communities and cultural life it is worth stating that residents are not passive agents, flattened to be understood only as victims. No: they carry them long and complex trajectories of fighting for rights including efforts within favelas to change the policies in place and fundamentally to shift the language, narratives and image of their representation. In the final section we explore some recent manifestations of this representational resistance that works to counter the social and spatial segregation intergenerationally alive in Rio.

10.3 Representational Resistance

The following three examples of representational resistance reflect the contemporary efforts of *favelados* to change public imaginaries of them in the city of Rio. The cases draw on encounters and observations during ethnographic participatory research by the primary author in Maré, between 2019 and 2020. These cases were not the main focus of the fieldwork research, which instead centres on the work of Redes de Maré, an NGO working on multiple fronts including projects around the ‘right to the city’. All of the following cases emerged in conversations at public events in Maré somewhat unexpectedly. We highlight them here as valuable illustrations of forms of representational resistance and claims for sovereignty that challenge the public security policies at play in Rio.

These forms of representational resistance use knowledge production tools and technologies of and from the favelas. What we mean by this can be elucidated through an encounter with historian Pâmela Carvalho, coordinator at Redes da Maré, who mentioned the ancestral character of technologies from the favela while lecturing on blackness in October 2019. In the lecture, Carvalho emphasised that technologies emerge as local social movements leaders are replaced with a new generation of black young people who recognise the need to reclaim the past and forge 'an ancestral fight in the future'. These new generations recognise the power of territories can be formed through the collective action of *favelados* movements relying on 'technologies' such as: data gathered and produced on-the-ground; a racialised perspective of care; and on tools that articulate the language, voice and roots of residents. Carvalho argued for care as a kind of technology, as a survival tool, fully absent in the role of the state providing rights and yet present in the care of mothers, aunts, grandmothers and neighbours. The technologies of and from the favelas that Carvalho refers to, then, are tools and knowledges expressed in publications, letters, manifestos, mappings, storytelling projects, visual materials, spatial interventions and plans and are informed on intergenerational experiences that propitiated the construction of spaces of solidarity, resistance and sociability.

10.3.1 *Fórum Basta de Violência!*

The first case we want to highlight is 'Fórum Basta de Violência! Outra Maré é possível…' (the Forum Stop the Violence! Another Maré is Possible…), a group of discussions formed by residents and members from organisations and institutions in Maré and co- organised by Redes da Maré. On 24 May 2017, the first event of the Forum took place in the form of a peace march for Maré in response to the consequences of lethal violence in the area. Some 5,000

people marched through the streets of Maré protesting ongoing police operations that within the first five months of the year had killed 18 people, injured 16 and seen the death of a seven year-old child Fernanda Adriana Caparica Pinheiro while playing near Parque União (Strobi 2017). The march was a rallying call to bring attention to the violent environment to a wider public, including the media and government agencies.

The Forum's aim is to 'advance public security via a democratic and transparent process, uniting the neighbourhood's residents and civil society organisations in regular discussions and advocacy planning, as well as mapping police operations and publishing impact assessments' (Ruge 2017). Once a month, activist leaders, community journalists, social workers, school teachers and members of civil society organisations meet at a municipal school in Maré alongside victims of violence and people who have lost family members and friends. Currently they debate and collaborate for the ACP (Ação civil pública, i.e. civil public action) in Maré which is a local collective demand for justice to reduce and restrain police operations. By gathering complaints, witnesses and data from incursions, they make visible the effects of the operations through a body of evidence that shows the number of deaths and injured people, the days which schools and health care centres were closed and importantly stories provided by residents who were affected. They provide locally designed strategies to reduce the lethality of operations, endorsing measures such as the presence of ambulances in operation days and the hours of incursions being different from school hours or street markets. This is not to say it is an either or scenario of ending police operations altogether, or in making adjustments to minimise their harms, but rather one that makes claims for the everyday lives of *favelados* and the intergenerational effects of these incursions in Maré. The Forum is an example of representational resistance as they create spaces for citizen dialogue, to unify the multiplicity of

voices and agencies working within the Maré on issues of shared concern and to engage directly with public bodies and ministries to refute the dominant narratives placed on their territories (Figures 10.1 and 10.2).

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The second case is a community-led newspaper designed and produced by residents of Complexo do Alemão, a compound of favelas located less than three km from Maré. *Voz das Comunidades* is so well known that it first appeared in fieldwork conversations and interviews with Redes da Maré members working at the forefront of community-led communication for their local newspaper *Maré de Notícias*. The notion of 'community-led communication' became defined by *favelados* as entailing a practice of journalism and media production that takes favela residents as the main protagonists, centring their stories, demands and struggles. This is important since these stories are rarely acknowledged by the mainstream and national media, or if they are, they fall into familiar tropes of crime, poverty or violence. Operating since 2005, *Voz das Comunidades* was founded by an 11-year-old Rene Silva, who emerged as a key source of news on the ground during the 2010 UPP operations in Complexo do Alemão. Using Twitter, Silva and others connected to *Voz* gave real time updates of the police operations bringing visibility to the effects, the impacts and the voices of residents (Rekow 2015).

A recent example of their journalism focusses on the failed infrastructure project of the Teleférico do Alemão – a high-profile cable car. As a result of the investments of the Growth Acceleration Programme in favelas (PAC), the large scale infrastructure works and the occupation of police forces through the Pacifying Police Unit (UPP), the media content team at *Voz das Comunidades* mapped the aftermath of these measures at Alemão and the ways they

affected the lives of residents. Seeking a language that is attuned to the lived realities of residents, they provide a full account of the remaining conditions of the local infrastructure (the gargantuanly expensive Teleférico closed in 2016 after the Olympic Games) and the experience of safety of residents under the failed pacifying police unit programme. Gathering data from the territory and narratives of residents who lived through the implementation of policies, they address what Mariana Cavalcanti (2013) highlights as the constant waiting for urban improvement that residents endure under the ruins of a capitalistic, tourism-induced set of infrastructures. Highlighting the cable car infrastructure as an example, *Voz* published extensively about the failure of the public transport white elephant, which has now been abandoned and was closed for four years within the nine years of operation.[12]

In an interview for a research project on journalistic start- ups in Brazil by Beatriz Becker and Igor Waltz, Silva recounted that his motivation began 'when I opened a newspaper that is widely circulated in the city and did not find even a single bit of news about the slums. I perceived that I needed to and could do something to change the situation, for the community to also begin to appear in a newspaper' (2017, 130). Silva details the literalness of representational resistance in the fact of not being seen or reflected in the dominant public news media sources in the country. Following on from 2010, *Voz* emerged as the primary public journalism entity documenting the spatial transformations before, during and after the Olympic Games of 2016 in Rio. *Voz* has since become the largest site for reporting on Rio's favelas and became a reference for

[12] At the time of writing there are renewed promises of reviving the Teleférico. See: J. Cardiano. "Em meio a protestos, governo promete iniciar obras de recuperação do Teleférico do Alemão". *Voz das Comunidades.* Accessed March 28, 2022.

community journalism holding politicians, the public media and other agencies to account (Figure 10.3).

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10.3.3 *LabJaca*

The third example is the work of the laboratory of data and narratives LabJaca which is based in Jacarezinho. Jacarezinho is a favela with roughly 38,000 residents and originated from civil construction workers who settled there in the 1930s (Brum 2019). The lab was founded by two residents of Jacarezinho seeking to make data, research and communication more accessible through audiovisual narratives. According to the group's website, LabJaca 'is formed 100% by young black people trained in the audiovisual and is a flagship for the scientific dissemination of data and the potential of narratives from the favela and the peripheries, making research accessible to the population' (LabJaca 2021). Different from *Voz das Comunidades*, the group emerged in the aftermath of the UPP and its failures. LabJaca draws on contemporary topics such as environmental racism, cyber security, technologies that reproduce systemic racism and works to address the high costs of police operations. During fieldwork meetings in Redes da Maré[13], a member of LabJaca who was working in Maré at the time introduced the lab and their endeavour to interrogate the absence of data on favelas. He argued that this absence reflects a form of silencing *favelados*, especially during the pandemic where data over cases and deaths were outdated.

[13] This meeting was part of a series of weekly meetings held by the Communication Sector of Redes da Maré. The above-mentioned meeting took place in August 2020 through Zoom.

Among LabJaca's projects, the manifesto for Kathlen Romeu stands out as a particular form of contesting the necropolitical agenda of public security (LabJaca 2022). Romeu was a 24-year-old pregnant designer and resident of Complexo do Lins, another compound of favelas in the north side of the city. On 8 June 2021, Romeu died from a stray bullet during a day of police operations in the favela. As an outcome of her death, members of LabJaca and activists from the black movement of Jacarezinho created the manifesto to protest for her life and many others who died in similar circumstances (LabJaca 2022). The manifesto encompassed a plan of action and a memorial day with artists who created a graffiti wall on one of the bullet-studded walls to preserve Kathlen's memory and what she meant for the community. The plan's agenda gathered action lines such as investigating the current role of the Civil Police, Public Ministry and Government State, implementing a harm reduction plan for police incursions as established by the Federal Supreme Court, expelling the policemen involved in her case and the construction of a memorial in homage to black victims in Lins. This example fits within the overall object of the group which is 'to de-marginalize the narrative of the favela resident, valuing the knowledge that comes from the communities so that public policies can be guided that aim to promote these territories, generating social impact' (LabJaca 2021). This form of representational resistance works by incorporating data, visual design, public art and dissemination (Figure 10.4).

<COMP: Place Figure 10.4 Here>

10.4 A New Imaginary of What Is Already There

Grada Kilomba begins her oeuvre *Plantation Memories* with the historical analogy of the *mask of speechlessness*. The object was made of metal and inserted in the mouth of enslaved black people to prevent them from eating while working in plantations. As Kilomba writes: 'in this

sense, the mask represents colonialism as a whole. It symbolises the sadistic politics of conquest and its cruel regimes of silencing the so-called "Others": who can speak? What happens when we speak? And what can we speak about?' (2010, 16). These questions form the basis of our enquiry into symbolic erasures and representational resistance. And yet, through the *mask of speechlessness* Kilomba reminds us that the symbolic and representational are intrinsically linked to material conditions of life. The cases above answer the question of who can speak by creating forums, new journalism networks, or by using visual mediums to translate the narratives of the favelas. Each one of these acts of representational resistance forges new imaginaries of the favelas, but rather than arguing for what might be, they seek to demonstrate, to make visible, to presence the vitality and density of an imaginary that is already there.

In this chapter we foregrounded contemporary acts of representational resistance in the favelas of Rio and in so doing worked to continue to entangle the relationships of the formal and informal that lie at the centre of a collection like this one. This chapter began by demonstrating the historic relationship between material and symbolic erasure in Rio from the *cortiços* in the 19th century to the favelas throughout the 20th century. In the 21st century, as the integration of favelas entail their docility ('pacification') and attempts of defamiliarisation (Holston 2008), urban planning becomes a 'state of ambiguity and exception' (Roy 2009), where life unfolds at the intersections of power relations disputes (Cavalcanti 2013). Being constantly moulded by the entrails of the hyper- militarised forces that shape territorial dynamics, residents forge alternative ways to access their rights displaying practices that circumvent the current necropolitical public security.

The practices enacted by these groups seek to dismantle forms of control that are inherently violent and stigmatising, but they also illustrate the paradox of the formal and informal discourse

of urban planning in these areas. As described by Cavalcanti (2013), violence is used as justification for improving infrastructure side by side with measures of control that reproduce stereotypes and segregation. Drawing from Alsayyad's (2004) notion of informality as a new way of life, Cavalcanti addresses a 'consolidation of favelas' as the incorporation of these spaces and their growing centrality in city politics and policies. As favelas become more central to urban planning decisions, the institutionalisation of urbanisation policies becomes legitimised as 'a response to the territorial domination exercised by drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro' (Cavalcanti 2013, 194). Instead of providing care, support and autonomy for residents through the improvement of urban infrastructure, these planning decisions remind us that for those in power, favelas remain misrepresented within the urban imaginary. Opposing this imaginary and opening paths that recognise the struggles and fights of residents, the groups we highlighted design methodologies to document old and new forms of erasure and ways to survive the control and surveillance apparatus. They offer us a new imaginary of what is already there.

Figure 10.1 Peace march organised by Redes da Maré in 2017 and which unfolded into the 'Fórum Basta de violência, outra Maré é preciso …'.

Photo: Douglas Lopes, 2017.

Figure 10.2 Fórum Basta de Violência meeting.

Photo: Douglas Lopes, 2017 *Voz das Comunidades*.

Figure 10.3 Graffitti wall by Luna Bastos in memory of residents who died in police operations at Jacarezinho.

Photo: Bruno Sousa, 2021.

Figure 10.4 Disabled cable car at Complexo do Alemão documented by Voz das Comunidades .

Photo: Matheus Guimarães, 2022.

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