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**„Community Communication for Social Transformation:
The Perspective of Community Journalists from Rio de Janeiro's Favelas“**

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Stefanie Beßler, B.Sc.

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*“Eu só quero é ser feliz
Andar tranquilamente na favela onde eu nasci
E poder me orgulhar
E ter a consciência que o pobre tem seu lugar”*

(Cidinho e Doca – Funk Carioca Rap Duo)

*Para todos os que estão lutando para uma representação mais justa e sem preconceitos
– para uma transformação por um mundo melhor e mais inclusive.*

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Abstract

One-sided mainstream media coverage of favelas in Rio de Janeiro criminalizes and discriminates against favela residents. Thus, the goal of this master's thesis is to describe the perspective of community journalists on the current state of community media initiatives and their strategies as well as their evaluation of community communication's role in the struggle to counter the negative representations of favelas in the mainstream media. Following the propositions of an activist research methodology, this qualitative study is guided by Paulo Freire's concept of "action and reflection".

The participatory methods of semi-structured interviews and participant observations provide empirical material for the discussion which is guided by theoretical approaches from different disciplines. This research study illustrates the importance of an interdisciplinarity approach for contextualizing the current efforts by community journalists and their initiatives to challenge the stereotypical favela narrative. Therefore, the theoretical concepts of "community communication" from media and communication studies and Freire's "dialogical conscientization" approach are interlinked with the research field of "political economy of communications". This enables an evaluation of the strategies of community media initiatives with regard to the opportunities they have within a monopolized Brazilian media market in which political and economic elites dominate public debates in the mainstream media.

The most important results of this research are the relevance of Freire's concepts of political awareness and critical thinking for an understanding of the importance and influence of community communication for the change of favela representations. The strategies that community media initiatives and their journalists implement to reach this aspiration range from counter-fact storytelling and collective denunciations on social media to strategic communication to influencers of public opinion and infiltration of mainstream media. The easy access to social media channels and support by informal networks are regarded as solutions to their main challenge – financial restrictions. Yet, the importance of democratizing access to media and to media production for social transformations is recognized, based on Freire's understanding of structural change.

These findings bear important practical implications for community journalists and their initiatives as well as for other stakeholders who act in the realm of community communication. They include the importance of valuing existing informal networks for

financial and non-financial support and for the expansion of their impact. On the other hand, the advantages of the institutional integration of advocacy networks can be used to address necessary structural changes for a democratization of media.

A major limitation of this qualitative master's thesis is its small sample size which might restrict its applicability. Moreover, although the interdisciplinary design has enriched the results of the research study, its scope has limited the depth of the analysis of certain issues.

Therefore, this master's thesis recommends further interdisciplinary research according to the principles of activist methodology and proposes to extend the analysis of the topic to additional favelas. Finally, the research results may contribute to future research on networking and internationalization opportunities for community media initiatives.

Keywords: favela narratives, community communication, counter-representations, social media, democratization, social transformation

Resumo

A cobertura de mídia hegemônica das favelas no Rio de Janeiro criminaliza e discrimina os moradores das favelas. Por isso, o objetivo desta dissertação de mestrado é descrever a perspectiva dos jornalistas comunitários sobre o estado atual das iniciativas da mídia comunitária e a avaliação de suas estratégias e de seu papel na luta contra as representações negativas das favelas na grande mídia. Seguindo as proposições de uma metodologia de pesquisa ativista, este estudo qualitativo é pautado pelo conceito de ação e reflexão de Paulo Freire.

Os métodos participativos de entrevistas semi-estruturadas e observações participantes fornecem o material empírico para a discussão com as contribuições teóricas de diferentes disciplinas. Esta pesquisa ilustra a importância de uma abordagem interdisciplinar para contextualizar os esforços atuais de jornalistas comunitários e suas iniciativas para desafiar a estereotipada narrativa da favela. Portanto, os conceitos teóricos de “comunicação comunitária” dos estudos de mídia e comunicação e a abordagem de “conscientização dialógica” de Freire estão interligados com o campo de pesquisa da “economia política das comunicações”. Isso possibilita uma avaliação das estratégias das iniciativas da mídia comunitária em relação às oportunidades que elas têm dentro de um mercado de mídia brasileiro monopolizado, no qual as elites políticas e econômicas dominam os debates públicos na grande mídia.

Os resultados mais importantes desta pesquisa são a relevância dos conceitos de consciência política e pensamento crítico de Freire para a compreensão da importância e influência da comunicação comunitária para a mudança das representações da favela. As estratégias das iniciativas da mídia comunitária e seus jornalistas para esse fim vão desde a contrafação-contaço de histórias e denúncias coletivas nas mídias sociais, e a comunicação estratégica, até os influenciadores da opinião pública e a infiltração da grande mídia. O fácil acesso aos canais de mídia social e o suporte por redes informais são considerados soluções para seu principal desafio: restrições financeiras. No entanto, a importância de democratizar o acesso à mídia e à produção de mídia para transformações sociais é reconhecida, com base na compreensão de Freire da mudança estrutural.

Essas descobertas trazem importantes implicações práticas para os jornalistas comunitários e suas iniciativas, bem como para outras partes interessadas que atuam no

campo da comunicação comunitária. Incluem a importância de valorizar as redes informais existentes para apoio financeiro e não financeiro e para a expansão do seu impacto. Além disso, as vantagens da integração institucional de redes de advocacia podem ser usadas para tratar de mudanças estruturais necessárias para uma democratização da mídia.

Uma grande limitação desta dissertação de mestrado qualitativa é o pequeno tamanho da amostra, que pode restringir sua aplicabilidade. No entanto, o design interdisciplinar enriqueceu os resultados da pesquisa, embora seu escopo tenha limitado a profundidade da análise de certas questões.

Portanto, este trabalho encerra, recomendando mais pesquisas interdisciplinares de acordo com os princípios da metodologia ativista, e propõe estender a análise do tópico para favelas adicionais. Finalmente, os resultados da pesquisa podem contribuir para futuras pesquisas sobre oportunidades de networking e internacionalização para iniciativas de mídia comunitária.

Palavras-chave: favela narrativas, comunicação comunitária, contra-representações, mídias sociais, democratização, transformação social

Zusammenfassung

Die einseitige Berichterstattung über Favelas in Rio de Janeiro in den Mainstream-Medien kriminalisiert und diskriminiert ihre Bewohner*innen. Deshalb ist es das Ziel dieser Masterarbeit, die Perspektive der *community*-Journalisten*innen auf den aktuellen Stand der *community*-Medieninitiativen und die Bewertung ihrer Strategien und ihrer Rolle im Kampf gegen die negativen Darstellungen von *favelas* in den Mainstream-Medien zu beschreiben. In Anlehnung an die Vorschläge einer aktivistischen Forschungsmethodik orientiert sich diese qualitative Studie an Paulo Freires Konzept von „Aktion und Reflexion“.

Die partizipativen Methoden der halb-strukturierten Interviews und Teilnehmerbeobachtungen liefern das empirische Material für die Diskussion mit den theoretischen Beiträgen aus verschiedenen Disziplinen. Diese Forschungsstudie zeigt die Bedeutung eines interdisziplinären Ansatzes für die Kontextualisierung der aktuellen Bemühungen von *favela*-Journalist*innen und deren Initiativen, die stereotype *favela*-Narrative in Frage zu stellen. Daher werden die theoretischen Konzepte der „kommunalen Kommunikation“ aus der Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft und Freires Ansatz der „dialogischen Bewusstseinsbildung“ mit dem Forschungsfeld der „Politischen Ökonomie der Kommunikation“ verknüpft. Dies ermöglicht eine Bewertung der Strategien der *community*-Medieninitiativen im Hinblick auf die Möglichkeiten, die sie innerhalb eines monopolisierten brasilianischen Medienmarktes haben, in welchen politische und wirtschaftliche Eliten die öffentlichen Debatten in den Mainstream-Medien beherrschen.

Die wichtigsten Ergebnisse dieser Forschung sind die aufgezeigte Relevanz von Freires Konzepten der politischen Bewusstseinsbildung und des kritischen Denkens für ein Verständnis der Bedeutung und des Einflusses der kommunalen Kommunikation für die Veränderung der *favela*-Repräsentationen. Die Strategien der *community*-Medieninitiativen und ihrer Journalist*innen reichen dabei von *counter-fact-Storytelling* und kollektiven Denunziationen in den sozialen Medien bis hin zu strategischer Kommunikation und Einflussnahme auf die öffentliche Meinung und Infiltration der Mainstream-Medien. Der einfache Zugang zu sozialen Medienkanälen und die Unterstützung aus informellen Netzwerken werden als Lösungen für ihre größte Herausforderung – den fehlenden finanziellen Mitteln – angesehen. Dennoch wird die

Wichtigkeit einer Demokratisierung des Medienzugangs und -produktion für gesellschaftliche Transformationen erkannt, in Anlehnung an Freires Verständnis von struktureller Veränderung.

Diese Forschungsergebnisse haben wichtige praktische Implikationen für die Journalist*innen und ihre Initiativen sowie für andere Akteur*innen, die im Bereich der kommunalen Kommunikation tätig sind. Sie beinhalten zum einen die Wichtigkeit, bereits bestehende informelle Netzwerke für finanzielle und nicht-finanzielle Unterstützung sowie für die Expansion ihres Wirkungskreises anzuerkennen. Zum anderen können die Vorteile der institutionellen Anbindung von *advocacy*-Netzwerken genutzt werden, um notwendige strukturelle Veränderungen für eine Demokratisierung der Medien anzugehen.

Eine wesentliche Einschränkung dieser qualitativen Masterarbeit ist ihre geringe Stichprobengröße, die ihre Anwendbarkeit einschränken könnte. Darüber hinaus, obwohl die interdisziplinäre Gestaltung die Ergebnisse der Studie bereichert hat, hat die limitierte Größe dieser Arbeit eine tiefergehende Analyse von bestimmten Aspekten eingeschränkt.

Daher empfiehlt diese Masterarbeit eine weitergehende, interdisziplinäre Forschung nach den Prinzipien der aktivistischen Methodik und schlägt vor, die Analyse des Themas auf weitere *favelas* auszuweiten. Schließlich können die Forschungsergebnisse einen Beitrag für zukünftige Forschungsarbeiten zu Vernetzungs- und Internationalisierungsmöglichkeiten für *community*-Medieninitiativen leisten.

Schlagwörter: Favela-Narrativen, kommunale Kommunikation, Kontra-Repräsentationen, soziale Medien, Demokratisierung, soziale Transformation

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Abbreviations

ANF	–	<i>Agência de Notícias das Favelas</i> (Favela News Agency)
CatComm	–	Catalytic Communities
FNDC	–	<i>Fórum Nacional pela Democratização da Comunicação</i> (National Forum for the Democratization of Communication)
IBGE	–	<i>Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística</i> (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
ISP	–	<i>Instituto de Segurança Pública</i> (Institute of Public Security)
LECC	–	<i>Laboratório de Estudos em Comunicação Comunitária</i> (Laboratory for Community Media Studies)
NGO	–	Non-governmental Organization
PAR	–	Participatory Action Research
ROW	–	RioOnWatch
SECOM	–	<i>Secretaria Especial de Comunicação Social da Presidência da República</i> (The President's Social Communication Secretariat)
PT	–	<i>Partido dos Trabalhadores</i> (Worker's Party)
UFRJ	–	<i>Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro</i> (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro)
UPP	–	<i>Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora</i> (Pacifying Police Units)

1 Introduction

“A grande mídia só tem uma preocupação básica com favela: é enfatizar que a favela é um lugar de violência para moradores do Rio, do Brasil e de fora do Brasil. Isso consegue criar esse exterior de que são áreas violentas. Então, a responsabilidade que a grande mídia tem: se você ligar o TV, tem várias programas de polêmica, programas de polícia. São horríveis. Eles não mostram nada. A favela pode ter feito um evento de qualidade, de bondade, não mostra. Se tiver dando um tiro, eles vão lá e mostram aquele tiro e repete mil vezes. Então, essas pessoas precisam ser reprimido pela polícia e toda a culpa encona do tráfico e nunca fazem a análise porque que aqueles meninos foram pelo tráfico - nunca. Então, eles falam isso para quem não mora na favela e convence quem mora na favela que aquele lugar realmente é daquele jeito, que aquele lugar merece toda aquele ponto de vista.”

(Community Journalist, I-2, 2018)

1.1 Research Topic and Interest

Historically, mainstream media in Brazil have contributed immensely to the construction of prejudices against *favelas*¹ and their residents. More than one fifth of Rio de Janeiro's 16.3 million city inhabitants lives in these informal settlements (IBGE, 2013)². Counting over 1,000 favelas, Rio de Janeiro is the city with the largest number of favela residents in Brazil today (CatComm, 2018). Many research studies highlighted the fact that popular media generally constructs favelas as spaces without urban infrastructure, law and order, or any sense of morality while being poor, dangerous and chaotic places (see e.g. Lacerda, 2014; Nunes, 2017; Paiva & dos Santos, C. H. R., 2008; Ramos & Paiva, 2007; Ramos, Paiva, & Nunes, 2017; Rocha, 2007; Valladares, 2000).

The problematic issue of this favela narrative commonly employed by mainstream media is its stereotypical homogenization of favelas which contributes significantly to the

¹ See Oliveira, (1985) and Valladares (2005): The term *favela* originates from a plant which covered the area of the *Morro da Providência* in Rio de Janeiro. This hill is generally told to be the first favela of the city as it was occupied by veterans after the war of Canudos in 1897, who were denied the land in Rio promised to them. Soon around the 1930s, other hills near the city center were occupied by rural migrants, who had been displaced from other areas by the state, and now sought to live near their workplace. These informal settlements have thus been classified as favelas.

² Considering the set of “*aglomerados subnormais*” (non-normal territories) as classified by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) census.

discrimination of the favela residents (see Gondim, 2006; Observatório de Favelas, 2014; Perlman, 2010; Valladares, 2005). The media landscape (or media-scape) in Brazil is highly monopolized, it is only controlled by six powerful Brazilian families (Media Ownership Monitor Brazil, 2017). Correspondingly, these media-conglomerates have great influence over the formation of public opinion and the perception on favela residents (see e.g. CatComm, 2013).

What exacerbates this issue even more is the current political and economic crisis in the country, due to which poverty and crime rates have increased. According to data of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, extreme poverty³ grew by over 11% in 2017 in comparison to 2016 (IBGE, 2017). Similarly, according to statistics from the Rio state government, incidences of lethal violence have increased by 8% in 2017 compared to the previous year, and in comparison to 2015, the number augmented by as much as 26% (ISP, 2018). Correspondingly, these socio-economic deteriorations have led to an intensified focus on violence and crime in public discourses, especially in the news coverage about favelas in Rio de Janeiro (de Souza e Silva, J. & Ansel, 2012; Paiva & dos Santos, C. H. R., 2008; Ramos & Paiva, 2007).

In addition to the discrimination of the favela residents through such negative news coverage and public discourses, these favela narratives constitute the basis for other therewith connected problems. They are illustrated by Lacerda's (2014) analysis of the discourse produced by Brazilian society which reveals that the ideological conception of favelas determines the creation of public policies that reinforce the prejudicial notion against them. Accordingly, Leite (2012) states that the social construction of favelas as violent and marginal territories has significantly shaped the politics for public security. It has directed how public governance has treated these places and their populations and restricted the favela residents' access to urban infrastructures and public goods.

For example, current public security policies are directed at the prosecution of crime and drug trafficking, which is often accompanied by military interventions and police operations in favela areas. Among favela residents, Rio's young black men are disproportionally affected by violence exerted through the executive powers of the state. According to the

³ The IBGE (2017) defines extreme poverty according to the World Bank's global poverty line which regards the income per capita of less than US\$1.90 a day as the limit for extreme poverty in developing countries.

Brazilian Forum on Public Safety (2017), 4,224 Brazilians lost their lives in conflicts with civil and military police in 2016, which marks an increase by around 26% compared to the previous year. Nearly 22,000 were killed in police operations between 2009 and 2016. Of those dead, 99.3% were men, 81.8% were between the ages of 12 and 29, and 76.2% were black (Forum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2017).

Many urban planning projects, consider favelas as a disadvantage for a homogeneous city structure and want to see these places removed. Often, this results in eviction activities (Leite, 2012). The Popular Committee on the World Cup and Olympics issued a dossier (2015) which presents official data issued by the City Hall. It states that “a total of 22,059 families have been removed in the city of Rio de Janeiro, amounting to 77,206 people, between 2009 and 2015” (p. 20) and it estimates that “at least 4,120 families have been removed and 2,486 remain under threat of removal, by reasons directly or indirectly related to the Olympic Project” (p. 20).

According to Lacerda, “the focus on the precariousness of favelas ignores the cause of their conditions, that is, the inequality in overall wealth distribution” (2014, p. 91). Furthermore, the way favelas are generally portrayed ignores communal innovations, solutions to their local problems and community engagement, as well as the rich cultural resources these communities can offer (see e.g. Catalytic Communities, 2016; Observatório de Favelas, 2014).

This misconception and its negative impacts on favela residents as afore highlighted are the reasons why local NGOs such as *Catalytic Communities* (CatComm) advocate alternative narratives about favelas that focus more on their socio-political potential, rather than seeing them as a threat to society. Changing the negative representations of favelas is also the concern of local favela community journalists and community media initiatives⁴ that are currently trying to confront the stereotypical mainstream narrative about themselves and their homes by producing authentic journalistic coverage on favelas. This independent reporting gives them the opportunity for self-description and critical self-reflection about what is important to them and their community. Thus, it can

⁴ I prefer to utilize the term “community communication initiatives” or “community media initiatives” because this definition focuses on the social engagement aspect and on the active involvement of the residents which is one of the central factors that differentiates these local communication initiatives from any other media outlet.

serve as an emancipatory resistance tool against negative mainstream media representation.

Research Topic in Short

In view of the outlined problem, the research topic of this thesis is the description of the perspective of community journalists on the current state of community media initiatives and the evaluation of their role in the struggle to confront public opinions about favelas and the discrimination of favela residents.

Research Interest and Motivation

This topic evolved due to my interest in favelas which was evoked exactly due to these cultural representations about favelas in Brazil in the media, even before I stayed in Brazil for my exchange semester in Rio de Janeiro from July 2017 to March 2018. For instance, I watched the well-known movie “City of God” (2002), which displays favelas as an urban exceptionality where drug gangs and police operations shape the everyday life of its residents.

However, through personal experiences, such as the contact to friends who grew up in favelas and through my participation in local NGOs, I realized that the living experience of favelas incorporates is much more multifaceted than drug crimes and violence. Through my stay in Rio de Janeiro, I was able to gain insight into the daily hardships of favela residents and their struggle against social inequalities and discriminations. I was overwhelmed by their power of resistance against social injustice, their innovative and sustainable community solutions to local problems and their cultural richness which is visible only to those who visit these places themselves or who follow local community media.

Since I wanted to know more about Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, I began to look for alternative sources of information that transcend the popular myths and narratives. In November 2017, I found the local newspaper “*A Voz da Favela*” issued by the NGO *Agência de Notícias das Favelas* (ANF), as it was distributed on the streets in the city center. It is a local community media newspaper that provides an alternative news coverage about favelas. Henceforward, my curiosity was directed towards the construction of an alternative discourse about the favelas in Rio de Janeiro and the various other local initiatives that are engaged in the process. I wanted to find out which specific

strategies can be pursued to present a different narrative (or counter-narrative) which is not exclusively concerned with the negative aspects of favela communities, but rather highlights their positive aspects. Due to my experiences in Rio de Janeiro, I figured that once the stereotypical representations of favelas are deconstructed, the roots of their stigma and the resulting negative impacts on favela inhabitants' lives could be challenged. For this purpose, I focus in this thesis on the analysis of the possible strategies for changing the favela narrative in the media so as to enable a transformation of the community members' social reality for the better.

1.2 State of the Art and Interdisciplinarity

In this section, I will outline the current state of research literature on those disciplines that provide the theoretical framework for this thesis. I will debate how an interdisciplinary analysis contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic of favela representations in the media and the actions of community journalists and their community media initiatives.

Media and Communication Studies

Media and communication studies have analyzed different aspects of alternative media since the 1960s and referred to it by using different terminology: “radical media”, a term coined by Downing (2001); “citizen’s media” by Rodríguez (2001); and “popular”, “participatory”, “guerrilla”, “grassroot” or “counter-hegemonic” media (Rennie, 2006). In this thesis, I treat “alternative media”⁵ as the overarching term. I understand it as the “practices of symbolic production which contest (in some way) media power itself – that is, the concentration of symbolic power in media institutions” (Couldry, 2002, p. 25). Furthermore, I chose to work with the concept of “community media” as it highlights the important role of the favela residents. It additionally reflects the fact that they refer to themselves as “*comunidade*”.⁶ Couldry’s definition allows for an understanding of

⁵ For an analytical overview of definitions and notions of alternative media, see Atton (2002).

⁶ In the last decades, euphemistic alternatives such as “*morro*” or “*comunidade*” were used by favela residents in order to avoid the negative stigma that comes with the term “*favela*”, states Lacerda (2014, p. 78). Nevertheless, the field work revealed that “*favela*” is increasingly used in an emancipatory way to emphasize and re-signify peoples’ identity positively, especially in the context of activist groups or social movements.

“community media” as one form of alternative media as it disputes the content of mainstream media.

In addition, it serves to analyze the representational strategies for favelas by local community media journalists, i.e. how they represent themselves and communicate the topics that are most relevant for them.

For this thesis, “community communication” is defined as the necessary activity for the constitution of community media vehicles. While the topic has been researched by Festa (1986) and Peruzzo (2004), Raquel Paiva’s *“O Espírito Comum”* (2003) has significantly inspired this work as she has shaped the recent discussion on community communication in Brazil. In the mentioned work, she studied the communal production of local journalism and the concept of community⁷ in the age of capitalist globalization, drawing territorial connections to Rio de Janeiro. Thus, this work relies on her understanding of community communication, as will be detailed in the theoretical framework in chapter 3.1.

Development Studies

The participatory aspect of community communication is highlighted in the discussion of community media in the Global South⁸ (Rennie, 2006, p. 3) within the field of development studies under the term “communication for development or social change” (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001, 2006, 2009; Servaes, Jacobson, & White, 2002; Wilkins, Obregon, & Tufte, 2014). Although these concepts focus on the effectiveness of the communication process for development projects from a Eurocentric and patronizing perspective (as it was also mainly pushed by United Nations Organizations such as the UNDP or UNESCO), they deliver important insights on the role of participation and the transformative character of community communication which is relevant for this thesis’s discussion with the ideas of Paulo Freire.

⁷ See Katz, Rice, Acord, Dasgupta, and David (2004) for a review of different concepts of community and its implications for media initiatives.

⁸ This term refers to North and South not in a mere geographical meaning, but to Global South as the countries that are not at the core of global capitalism and to the Global North as the central economies.

So far, academic research has only investigated Paulo Freire's notion of "dialogical communication" (2014)⁹ as a normative theory of participatory communication (see e.g. Servaes, 2008). However, it seems that the discussion of the emancipatory character of community media with respect to counter-narratives and their potential for social transformation has not explicitly been addressed so far. In chapter 3.2, I will explain why drawing this connection can help to understand the emancipatory effect of the engagement of community journalists and discuss the resulting implications for social transformations.

Political Economy

Apart from the participatory aspect of community communication, community media initiatives also incorporate a strong political aspect. This is because the aspiration for a more plural news coverage with different perspectives inherently criticize mainstream media's ignorance of valuable content and the preservation of existing power structures. Hence, the potential for the democratization of media and communication is an important aspect to be discussed in chapter 3.3 as it has been a recurrent issue during the field research. Topical research by Sartoretto (2016) emphasizes the relevance of political economic and structural aspects for the democratization of media. She highlights the importance of structural change which is needed due to the problematic relationship between national elites and monopolized media businesses in Latin America (Lugo-Ocando, 2008). Her research supports my claim that for a sustainable change of representations and discourses about favelas, structural issues have to be targeted at the same time.

Elaborating on the required contextualization of the research topic, chapter 4.1 problematizes the highly monopolized Brazilian media-scape. The case study by dos Santos and da Silva Lopes (2018) affirms these cross-ownerships by examining the financing of Brazilian television from a political economy perspective. However, the literature review showed that there is no study that specifically addresses the obstacles for Brazilian community media initiatives from the perspective of the community journalists themselves. Most research on community media fails to address important structural issues, such as the mentioned democratization of the media production and the

⁹ This work refers to the newest English version (30th anniversary edition) of Paulo Freire's work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (2014) which was originally published in Portuguese: "*Pedagogía do Oprimido*" (1970).

monopolized media market structure. Thus, the aim of this research study is to situate the work of local community journalists and initiatives within the context of dominant representations of favelas in the highly monopolized media-scape of Brazilian mainstream media, and to understand the possibilities and challenges for producing and effectively communicating counter-narratives about favelas from a local perspective.

Cultural Studies and Representations

Consequently, it is indispensable for this thesis's topic to problematize the representations of favelas in the mainstream media in order to understand the relevance of community communication initiative's objectives and strategies. Both Brazilian and foreign scholars (Mattos, 2010; Mattos, S., 2007; Paiva & Nóra, 2008; Penglase, 2007) analyzed the representations of favelas and their residents in Brazilian television as well as in newspapers and have contested the homogenized discourse on violence and criminality. Likewise, several studies have put a special emphasis on representations of public security policies and violence in the media (Ramos et al., 2017; Ramos & Paiva, 2007; Varjão, 2016). These findings are useful to explain the context of favela representations for this thesis in chapter 4.2 which addresses the content and mechanisms behind the construction of a hegemonic favela narrative in the mainstream media.

The most recent study was conducted by Nunes (2017) who analyzed the representation of violence and security on social media. To be precise, he provided a comprehensive overview over 156 local community Facebook pages, their network connections and the contents of their online posts. As those local community initiatives which I analyze for my research, primarily utilize Facebook as their communication channel, Nunes's study provides valuable context information about the main community social media channels in Rio de Janeiro, for the discussion in chapter 5.

Democratic Theory and New Media

With the emergence of globalization and new technologies, scholarship has ascribed new horizontal production possibilities, i.e. easier access to online media and appropriation of social network tools, to community communication. Academic scholarship analyzed new media (i.e. online technologies in the Internet) using the framework of democratic theory, especially with respect to political action of social movements in new media (see e.g. Castells, 2015; Couldry, 2015; Lievrouw, 2011). For the analysis of the community initiatives' strategies in chapter 5.2, I will refer to the findings of de Jong et al. (2005a)

and Milan (2009) who have relatedly undertaken research on the ways in which social movements can generally insert their issues into mainstream media.

Favela Media Activism

Most notably, this thesis is building upon Leonardo Custódio's (2016) doctoral thesis on "Favela Media Activism: Political trajectories of low-income Brazilian youth"¹⁰. Custódio's ethnographic investigation is highly relevant for this thesis since he describes the context of social inequality and discrimination that lead young favela residents in Rio de Janeiro to engage in media activism as part of their daily struggle for human rights and social justice. With the concept of "favela media activism", he explains local practices of journalism. Furthermore, he debates the role of media education and the relationship between activism and citizenship by drawing upon theories of counter-publics, communication for development and social change, and social movement theory.

In the following, I will present the key findings of Custódio's extensive study¹¹ that are relevant for the topic of my research. I will explain how the key thematic issues of my research represent an attempt to extend Custódio's findings with respect to his recommendations on which aspects further research on the topic of favela media practices should focus.

Firstly, as Custódio centers his analysis on the activism aspect of favela media practices he identifies the challenging of favela representations in the media as one of the topics that are relevant for understanding the potential of social change evoked through favela media activism. In his conclusion, Custódio mentions the potentializing effect of new media for the community initiatives and suggests further research on how favela counterpublics lead to decreases in discrimination about favelas in media (p. 225). Therefore, I want to contribute to his findings by primarily focusing my research topic on the representation of favelas in the mainstream media and on the online and offline strategies of community media initiatives to counter stereotypical favela narratives.

¹⁰ See a summary of his research in his book on "Favela Media Activism: Counter-publics for Human Rights in Brazil" (2017).

¹¹ Custódio's key findings: "They are (a) how media activism relates to existing struggles and movements inside and outside favelas, (b) the differences between NGO-riven and citizen-led initiatives, (c) how favela media activism relates to the formation of counterpublics, and (d) how engagement in favela media activism is a process of agency enactment through interaction framed by class-based and individualization imperatives" (2016, pp. 222–223).

Secondly, Custódio briefly mentions the importance of the pedagogical concepts of Paulo Freire in the context of media education but misses the opportunity to take Freire's ideas into account as a framework for political awareness building in a broader sense. Accordingly, I will try to further Custódio's extensive findings by analyzing the research topic of community media engagement from the theoretical perspective of Paulo Freire's dialogical conscientization concept for emancipation and empowerment. Specifically, I consider the aspect of empowerment and self-development as crucial for a full understanding of the impact that the engagement of the local community journalists entails for their own lives as well as for their social environment.

Thirdly, in his concluding remarks Custódio mentions the structural obstacles that the smaller community media initiatives are facing and recommends the further investigation of the initiatives' collective power potential (p. 225). This is another link to my research study which aims at a deeper understanding of the specific strategies which these community media initiatives intent to implement in order to dispute the symbolic and material hegemony of media monopolies. The most frequently recurring themes that shaped my research process circled around the network or cooperation potential of community media initiatives, which are aspects that Custódio did not explicitly investigate. As mentioned before, my study is also concerned with unequal power relations and I problematize the media monopoly in Brazil as one major constraint for the community journalists and their initiatives' effectiveness.

In brief, I want to contribute to academic scholarship on the topic of community media and to Custódio's key findings by including smaller, local media initiatives in other favelas than the big collectives that Custódio examined mostly in *Maré* and *Complexo de Alemão*. For a more diverse perspective, my focus lies specifically on the perspective of community journalists from the favelas of *Rocinha*, *Jacarezinho* and *Manguinhos*.¹²

Interdisciplinarity

The different relevant theoretical fields and concepts for analyzing community communication outlined above – from media or communication and development studies, as well as from critical sociology and political economy – show the complexity of the research problem. Consequently, this complexity suggests an interdisciplinary point of

¹² See a map of the location of Rio de Janeiro's favelas in appendix 8.1.

view for analyzing the various dimensions of the struggle of community journalists and their initiatives. By the same token, it requires an adequate research methodology, in this case guided by the practical principles of activist research (see chapter 2), to be able to comprehend the connections between the different theoretical contributions and the praxis.

Accordingly, by focusing in the theoretical framework (in chapter 3) on important concepts of media and communication studies, I aim to describe the characteristics of journalism and media coverage with specific reference to community communication and community media. Additionally, the present study incorporates critical sociological theories so as to analyze political awareness building concepts and the emancipatory character of community media. Moreover, I attempt to combine the field of cultural studies, to investigate media representations, with the perspective of political economy, to analyze structural issues of the media market (see chapter 4). In this way, this research project interlinks various disciplines and reaches the goal of the Master Program of Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies, which is to design the thesis in an interdisciplinary way.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

Based on my interest for the research topic and the identified research gaps described above, I developed the following main research question:

Which current strategies do local community journalists and media initiatives from Rio de Janeiro's favelas pursue in order to change their communal representations in the media?

The main research question can be further split into the following sub-questions:

1. *Which objectives do the community media initiatives have?*
2. *How do community journalists understand themselves within this context?
How does their engagement affect their personal development and lives?*
3. *Which structural barriers do community journalists identify for their work?*
4. *What role do they attribute to networks and cooperation?*
5. *How do they understand the democratization of media coverage about favelas?*

It is important to explain the underlying assumptions on which I built the development of my interview guide for the field research. Based on the relevant literature and my experiences during the field research, I assume that:

1. community reporting is more accurate and representative for the coverage of favelas than mainstream media;
2. individuals as well as collective actors can influence reality and induce social transformation processes;
3. ultimately, power structures in the media-scape are defining whether the strategies pursued by community media journalists and initiatives are effective.

With this master's thesis, I aim to illustrate the potential of community reporting as an empowerment tool for marginalized groups. By supporting and discussing the strategies of community journalists and community media initiatives, I intend to spread their ideas by providing a platform for their work, also in English-speaking circles and across Brazil's borders. Moreover, I aim to understand the obstacles that they are facing in order to provide helpful ideas about how they can extend their work and influence in the future. My analysis concentrates on the favela journalists and initiatives from Rio de Janeiro; its overall findings might also be applicable for other discriminated groups elsewhere. Finally, another purpose of this research project is to position the problem area of representations, discourses and critical media analysis, as well as reflection on hegemony and media ownership in the scientific focus of the sub-discipline of Latin American Studies and to promote further academic research in this area.

In this introductory chapter, I have presented the issue of the research topic, its relevance and my interest for the theme. Through outlining the various contributions from different disciplines, the complex interconnections became clear and justify this research's interdisciplinary approach and methodology. Moreover, this overview has already illustrated the structure of this thesis and presented research questions and objectives which will guide this investigation.

2 Methodological Framework

In this chapter, I will explain the methodological considerations for a qualitative research design and for a decolonial inspired activist research approach. In addition, I will present the methods that were chosen for answering the research questions: literature research, participatory observations and qualitative, semi-structured interviews.

2.1 Activist Research Methodology

In line with Paulo Freire's approach that favors emancipatory and self-reflected knowledge (Freire, 2014), I wanted to engage myself directly with the community media initiatives and actively accompany the work of the community journalists for this research project. Therefore, I initially designed my study according to the postulations of the qualitative research methodology of "Participatory Action Research" (PAR) as proposed by Orlando Fals-Borda (2006) or Charles Hale's (2001) "activist research" methodology.

Fals-Borda and Participatory Action Research

Fals-Borda is a Colombian sociologist who has significantly contributed to the development of PAR in Latin America. In the 1970s, various academics from the Social Sciences were concerned with the common positivist assumptions in academics which were reproducing the status quo and did not challenge the injustices as produced by modernity and capitalism (Fals-Borda, 2006).

Therefore, PAR evolved worldwide as an alternative methodological approach to the social sciences that served to decolonize one's own knowledge and to criticize hegemonic economic and political models (Streck, 2014). PAR also serves as an emancipatory tool and underlines the role of social movements for eliciting structural transformations and to promote social change (Consuegra Ascanio & Mercado Villarreal, 2017). In the following, I will explain the main features of PAR and draw the connection to Paulo Freire's ideas which are central to my research project.

According to Fals-Borda (1979), "action research" has always been concerned with the historically constituted social position of underprivileged groups under capitalism. PAR therefore "declared that the common people deserved to know more about their own life conditions in order to defend their interests, than do other social classes which monopolized knowledge, resources, techniques and power" (Fals-Borda, 2006, p. 29).

PAR departs from the understanding that there has to be a combination of knowledge and action, theory and praxis because “theory is not separable of praxis and the subject not separable from the object” (Fals-Borda, 1978, p. 81). Similarly, Paulo Freire calls for “action and reflection” during the knowledge generation process in his third chapter of the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (2014) (see more detailed in chapter 3.2). Fals-Borda noted that PAR’s praxis-inspired commitment found bases in Freire’s practical work of “dialogical conscientization” in Brazil (2006, p. 30). He further expresses that PAR has been built upon the pioneering works for social transformation, e.g. by the Peruvian socialist José Carlos Mariátegui which in turn were influenced by Marxist thoughts.

These emancipatory and transformative aspirations and the democratic character of the PAR methodology are central to my research project as it discusses the emancipatory strategies of marginalized groups within global power structures: the struggles of community journalists from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. For this reason, I found many parallels between Fals-Borda’s and Freire’s emancipatory understanding of participatory research and reflective knowledge production that questions the hegemony of dominant groups (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, pp. vii–viii; Freire, 2014).

Hale’s Concept of Activist Research

For a more comprehensive methodological framework, I want to add Hale’s concept of activist research in which he puts the most important methodological implications of PAR into a nutshell, when he explains the main characteristics of activist research:

Activist research: a) helps us better to understand the root causes of inequality, oppression, violence and related conditions of human suffering; b) is carried out, at each phase from conception through dissemination, in direct cooperation with an organized collective of people who themselves are subject to these conditions; c) is used, together with the people in question, to formulate strategies for transforming these conditions and to achieve the power necessary to make these strategies effective. (Hale, 2001, p. 13)

According to Hale, the purpose of activist research can only be fulfilled if its principles are pursued in every methodological step - from collectively developing a common set of problems for the formulation of the research question and objectives to actively including the researched group in the data collection process and interpretation of this data, so that they can acquire research skills themselves. The most crucial components of the activist research process are the dissemination of the research results and their validation by the participating group of people. Instead of a conventional review of academic scholarship,

this group will decide whether the generated knowledge is useful and helps to resolve their previously defined problem (Hale, 2001, pp. 14–15).

Accordingly, I tried to conceptualize my research in a way to not “leave the observed groups as victims of the academic exploitation” (Fals-Borda, 1978, p. 84). Yet, during my field research, I realized that the practical implementation of Hale’s activist research requires a significant amount of time in order to build up trust with the research participant group. Additionally, activist research methodology demands a constant reflection of the research process and its results which could not be realized during my three months of fieldwork. The availability of my interview partners was restricted as they were often enrolled in university, working to make a living, and were engaged in several social organizations. Even though I could not engage in participatory research with the community journalist at every stage of the process, I directed my overall research objectives towards the improvement of the situation of the community journalists and their initiatives, as well as to make the research results available for them.

Decolonial Perspective

Despite this practical impossibility to meet Hale’s and Fals-Borda’s requirements for activist or participatory action research, these approaches most adequately describe my methodological framework and also fit my intentions of positioning myself as a decolonial researcher from Europe in Brazil.

To understand the implications which a decolonial positioning has, I schematically point out that decolonial studies go one step further than post-colonial studies do. Post-colonial studies merely problematize the continued effect of colonialism after its formal abolishment. Decolonial studies aim to deconstruct and overcome the persisting power structures by questioning the Eurocentric orientation of knowledge production. (Mignolo, 2012; Quijano, 2000)

In contrast to the perception in mainstream academia that research should be objective and free of any subjective judgment, activist research requires a political positioning and a systematic reflection on how one’s own convictions have informed the understanding of the research problem (Hale, 2001, p. 14). The necessity to position myself was a central issue during the fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro where power is linked to skin color and racism is a significant issue. Likewise, as my research project is based on qualitative social research with empirical fieldwork as its central component, it is important to reflect

upon one's own background and role in the research process. In the subsequent paragraph, I will reflect on this and briefly address research ethics.

Taking the perspective of the marginalized and discriminated part of the Brazilian population was a challenge as it was never about turning their struggle into my struggle. Personally, I never had to face discriminatory actions because of my skin color or origin and I was raised with the comfort of receiving a sound education and the financial support of my parents. Therein lies my motivation, since I wanted to contribute to the community journalist's aims by utilizing my privileged position.¹³ By referencing their work, I am also trying to amplify the voice of the people involved in community media from the periphery. In addition, I can include the perspective from the Global South by citing Brazilian or Latin American academics.

2.2 Methods for the Fieldwork

Triangulation of Methods

This research project draws upon different methods for ensuring the validity of the results by utilizing the triangulation approach. According to Flick,

triangulation means that researchers take different perspectives on an issue under study [...] Furthermore it refers to combining different sorts of data on the background of the theoretical perspectives, which are applied to the data. (Flick, 2007, p. 41)

Therefore, according to the recommendations of Hearn et al. in "Action Research and New Media" (2009), I chose to combine the qualitative methods of participatory observation together with semi-structured interviews to generate an empirical data base in the form of audio files which I could later analyze using the different theoretical perspectives described in the subsequent chapter 3.

Participant Observation

For this study, I chose the method of participant observation. It is defined as the observation from a member's perspective which may influence the observed situation due to one's own participation in it (Flick, 2009, pp. 226–227). I chose this method in order to learn about the local context and understand the range of action of the favela-based

¹³ See e.g. as discussed by newer implementations of PAR, such as Sandwick et al. (2018, p. 487).

community media journalists and initiatives through taking field notes and conducting a research diary.

Semi-Standardized Interviews

Therefore, the second qualitative methods that I chose for the data collection were semi-standardized interviews. They allow for open questions in combination with theory-driven, hypotheses-directed questions which are asked in order to make the interviewees' implicit knowledge explicit (Flick, 2009, pp. 156–157). The preceding literature review and the collected information from the participant observations with NGOs as well as experiences from favela visits, helped me to develop an interview guide (see appendix 8.2) which I structured into the following topic areas:

- *Personal background/ experience, motivation and development of the community journalists*
- *Strategies, objectives, challenges for the community media initiatives and the impact of their work in their respective favelas*
- *Understanding of the democratization of media/ representations*
- *Relation to mainstream media*
- *Role of cooperation and networks*

However, this interview guide only served as an orientation as I was adapting my specific questions according to previously researched information about the interviewee and about the initiative that they were working for. Additionally, conducting the interviews in a semi-structured way and readapting my questions constantly to the issues which the interview participants regarded as most relevant for them, allowed me to compensate for the fact that I was not able to adhere to my aspired participatory research methodology. Although I could not develop the research questions together with the community journalists, as it is normally required by this methodology, this method still allowed me to leave space for open questions and put the perspective of the community journalists into focus.

2.3 Research Process and Sampling Criteria for the Empirical Material

In this section, I will describe my research process as well as my sampling criteria and give an overview over the empirical data that my implemented methods generated.

Literature Review

Preceding the field phase, in autumn 2017 I conducted a rough literature review on the issue of community communication, alternative media and favela representations in order to gain an overview of the topic. At a very early stage in the process, I came across the work of Raquel Paiva on community communication. She is a professor for the Communication Sciences Department at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). I was spending my exchange semester at this university which gave me access to its infrastructure. Thus, I was able to join the university's Laboratory for Community Communication Studies (LECC) where I was discussing Paiva's monography on "*O Espírito Comum*" (2003) with her being the group's coordinator, other professors and students. At the specialized library of the communication school department (ECO), I was able to conduct a more detailed literature research and found many local university papers that were addressing the issue of peripheral journalism and favela representations in the media.

Agência de Notícias das Favelas

As highlighted in the introduction (see chapter 1.1), I came into contact with the NGO *Agência de Notícias das Favelas* (ANF) in November 2017, through their printed journal "*A Voz da Favela*". This journal is distributed across the city, often by former homeless people or those with a precarious income situation, in exchange of voluntary monetary contributions. ANF claims to be the first favela news agency and state its objectives as follows:

o principal objetivo da Agência de Notícias das Favelas (ANF) é democratizar a informação de modo geral, não apenas veiculando notícias das favelas para o mundo, mas sobretudo estimulando a integração e a troca de informações entre as favelas, sempre com a finalidade de melhorar, por meio da formação de uma ampla frente popular, a qualidade de vida do povo, pois acreditamos que um mundo melhor é possível. (ANF, 2018)

My involvement with ANF provided me with important insights into the ongoing fight for a proportion of the governmental budget for media funding, so that it can be spent to support alternative media instead of exclusively the common popular media. Hence, I had the possibility to accompany two public discussion rounds in the chamber of the city council on democracy and community media. Additionally, I observed the financial challenges for NGOs such as ANF and its efforts to bundle the actors involved in the

community media and communication field, as they were hosting the “1. Encontro Latinoamericano de Comunicação Comunitária” in July 2017.¹⁴

Catalytic Communities

Simultaneously, I was reaching out for other sources of alternative media and found a first access to the research field via the Rio-based NGO *Catalytic Communities* (CatComm) and its program *RioOnWatch*. The news site, *RioOnWatch.org*, was created in 2010 as part of a program to bring visibility to the voice of the favela communities during the time when the Olympic Games were held in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Since 2007, its

editorial line is committed to observing the Olympic legacy and monitoring the international and domestic press coverage of favelas [...], documenting favela residents’ views of and for public policy [...] and highlighting organizing strategies, community solutions. (RioOnWatch, 2018)

Reflection on the Access to the Research Field

It is important to reflect on the access to the research field (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 33) as this was, in my case, induced by my contact to NGOs and connected to my own participation in the NGO CatComm for ROW as an academic collaborator in December 2017. This allowed me to obtain inside information and access to local community journalists and initiatives. In return, I was contributing to a series of community media profiles and later published the main findings of my research in a series of articles. This institutional link in accessing the research field had some important implications. For instance, the selection of the interviewees was connected to their favorable relationship with the NGO. They were often already involved in a collaboration project working as community reporters for ROW. In addition, I was orienting my interview guide on the requirements for the community media profiles as I often conducted one interview for both the profile and my research.

However, my work with ROW facilitated the contact with those community media journalists as they trusted this organization and trust is a central concern for this research field. This is the case because they, as members of marginalized groups, have often experienced discrimination and have to fight for their own representations. As a result, the confrontation with academic scholarship often constitutes a reproduction of

¹⁴ See ANF (2017) for a description of the event.

hierarchies and thus retention towards non-local researchers is common. In my double function as a university researcher and ROW representative, I encountered many community journalists that were eager to engage in discussions concerned with their causes and which seek to amplify their impact.

After my involvement with ANF and ROW, I realized that there already exists enough academic focus on the work of NGOs in the field of community communication projects. I found that I had to focus on the local community initiatives and their favela journalists themselves if I wanted to contribute to already existing research on the issue and to conduct my field research according to the postulations of the participatory action research, as described in chapter 2.1.

Sampling Criteria

For this end, I chose my sampling criteria for the selection of my interview participants by combining different purposive sampling strategies, according to Patton (2002): typical cases, intensity and convenience sampling (as cited in Flick, 2009, p. 122). For collecting comprehensive data, I defined the criterion of favela-born and -based community journalists that also work for a local community media outlet as the important common characteristic. Moreover, I tried to include different geographical locations and favelas. This is important for the specific case of Rio de Janeiro's favelas which cannot be referred to as a homogenous category. There exists a great degree of variety between favelas in Rio de Janeiro not only culturally but also regarding socio-economic aspects (da Silva, L. A. M., 2011, p. 700). The biggest differences can be observed especially between the favelas that are situated in the more urbanized South Zone and the poorer North Zone with less infrastructure.¹⁵ These different socio-economic and political circumstances are likely to have an impact on the lives and experiences of the community journalists as well as the work of different local community media initiatives.

Empirical Data Corpus

In the end, I conducted seven interviews with favela community journalists from *Manguinhos*, *Jacaré* (both North Zone) and *Rocinha* (South Zone) with a duration ranging from 30 minutes to one hour and 27 minutes (see appendix 8.3). The empirical

¹⁵ Likewise, the internal variations within the favelas should be considered, although this work refers to them conjointly as South or North Zone favelas for facilitation purposes.

data also includes three interviews which I conducted in my orientation phase as to gain an overview of the field of study, talking to UFRJ professor Raquel Paiva and the NGO leaders of CatComm, Theresa Williamson, and of ANF, André Fernandes. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese (except with Theresa Williamson in English) and they were sound-recorded with the previously obtained permission of the interviewees. This facilitated the transcription of the interviews significantly as my first language is neither Portuguese nor English.

Through accompanying documentation in a research diary, I could keep track of my daily experiences in Rio de Janeiro, my visits to different favelas in Rio de Janeiro and participation of events there. These practical understandings generated important contextual knowledge on the current socio-economic and political situation and other daily struggles that were impacting the work of my target research group. Likewise, I was also constantly revising the community media initiatives' websites and social media channels in order to collect case study material for illustration and documentation purposes.

2.4 Evaluation Methods

For the analysis of over 150 pages of interview transcripts and field notes, it was meaningful to combine Mayring's (2010) qualitative content analysis with the open, axial and selective coding method, as described by Uwe Flick (2009, pp. 307–328).

Qualitative content analysis is useful for a reduction of the collected material and for an unambiguous analysis of subjective viewpoints (Flick, 2009, p. 328), whereas the coding method is useful for extracting the conceptual structure and interrelations of qualitative interviews (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 158). This is achieved by developing theme categories and sub-categories with their interlinkages (pp. 163-165). Consequently, I evaluated my collected empirical data material in the following way:

For the interview analyses, I deduced pre-defined categories and codes from my interview guide (see appendix 8.2) and the theoretical framework. Thus, I was ensuring the coherence of the collection and interpretation of my empirical data as the interview sections in the guide are linked to the sub-questions of my research question. In a next step, I structured the codes into sub-categories according to their interrelations and noted them down in the coding guideline (see appendix 8.4). Then, I applied the selected codes to all interview transcripts. As I conducted my semi-structured interviews in a partly open

manner, I successively found new important passages which I paraphrased and to which I ascribed a new open code-unit and added it to the coding guideline. In this way, I could circumvent some of the shortfalls of the rather schematic interpretation of qualitative content analysis (Flick, 2009, p. 328). Afterwards, I applied the code guideline to my field notes as well as my research diary, so as to complete the collected material. Finally, I analyzed this empirical material according to the categories and with respect to the theoretical and contextual framework described in chapter 3 and 4.

In this chapter on methodology, I explained how the chosen activist research methodology is in line with the thematic focus of this thesis. Thereupon, I presented the utilized qualitative methods and criteria according to which the interviewees were selected. Finally, I depicted the evaluation methods that are most adequate for the analysis of my empirical material. The next chapter will build the theoretical framework which will be needed for the discussion of the empirical material in chapter 5.

3 Theoretical Framework

“No one can say a true word alone – nor can he say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.” (Paulo Freire)

3.1 Community Communication for Social Transformation

3.1.1 Foundations of Community Communication

As explained in the introductory chapter (see 1.2), this thesis refers to the explanations of Paiva for “community” and “communication” to obtain a better understanding of community communication. For Paiva, “community” is not a mere sociological concept, but rather a cultural instrument which transports the idea of social change (Paiva, 2003, p. 17). Therefore, the use of the term “community communication” within this thesis is restricted to the communication of people living in favelas. It is not adequate to transfer this concept to city districts of higher social classes where the struggle for social justice and against inequality is not displaying itself explicitly. This will be important for the co-interpretation of the literature with the empirical findings in chapter 5.

Concerning Paiva’s understanding of “communication”, she further elaborates that:

o entendimento que se persegue de comunicação é aquele que efetivamente possa comprometer o indivíduo com o exercício de sua cidadania, que possa permitir-lhe uma atuação no seu real-histórico, podendo transformar, inclusive, sua existência e a das pessoas à sua volta. (Paiva, 2003, p. 49)

She connects the act of communication to the enactment of citizenship and already hints at its role for inducing social transformation which will be later discussed in connection to the concepts of Paulo Freire (in chapter 3.2). Furthermore, community communication is locally embedded and communicates the specific interests of that community and its reality:

O surgimento de veículos a partir dos grupos comunitários tem caráter basicamente local, de abordagem de temática relacionada ao particular, ao que interessa especificamente aquele grupo, e de conscientização de sua realidade. (Paiva, 2003, p. 56)

Before citizenship can be enacted and social transformation is induced, Paiva assumes that a realization (here “conscientization”) of one’s own social reality has to precede. These are relevant aspects for the analysis in chapter 5.

Paiva outlines that alternative, community media evolved due to the necessity to produce own narratives about one's own reality without filters or intermediaries, because the big information networks have monopolized the public version of facts (2003, pp. 135–139).

In this respect, community media can be seen as an opposition to mass or mainstream media, as it has no entrepreneurial orientation because it is usually run on a not-for-profit basis and is commonly determined by group-oriented or communitarian ends (Paiva, 2003; Rennie, 2006). Moreover, this implies the active participation of community members in the production process, which is a distinctive characteristic (Paiva, 2003; Rennie, 2006).

In addition, there are distinctive characteristics for community vehicle news. Paiva claims that they have to deliver context information about happenings that go beyond a superficial or sensationalized news coverage, as this is common for mass media (2003, pp. 53–55); they must be proximate, i.e. affecting the daily lives of the community residents, and thus tell stories that are of importance to them (2003, p. 140).

Counter-Narratives & Counter-Publics

Having outlined the main features of community communication enacted in community media and its difference to mainstream media, it becomes clear that community communication is transporting a different narrative of the reality of the community than mainstream media does.

For Paiva, “la narrativa se ofrece como pieza central de una estrategia de comunicación inclusiva en la lucha contrahegemónica emprendida por las minorías en la actualidad” (Paiva, 2006, p. 60). As narratives dispute mainstream media content, they can be considered as a “counter-narratives”. Consequently, community communication can create alternative public debates which form what Custódio (2016) refers to as “favela counter-publics” (2016). These counter-publics are challenging “a predominantly discriminatory and exclusive public sphere” (p. 226) which is dominated by mainstream media.¹⁶

¹⁶ This conceptualization builds the definition of “bourgeois public sphere” by Habermas (1962) and the discussion of alternative “proletarian public sphere” by Negt and Kluge (1972).

3.1.2 Community Media's Role for Social Transformation

It has become clear, that community communication and media are means for self-representation for marginalized groups as they actively challenge the contents of mass media through counter-narratives. As the final impact of community communication manifests itself in the change for the better concerning their social reality, it is important to look at the potential for social transformation of communication by the marginalized.

In the following, I will draw the connection between the postulations of community communication and its role for social transformation by elaborating on what the different approaches to the production of community media – as presented in the introductory chapter (see 1.2) – contribute to the understanding of how community communication can induce changes in social reality.

Social Change and Transformation

First, it is important to define what exactly constitutes social change and for whom this change is to occur. According to Jara (2010), “[d]ifferent definitions concur that society is a system of multiple and diverse relationships, thus social change refers to the modification of such relationships” (p. 288). She further states that political theory and social movements are discordant with respect to the complex distinction between social change and social transformation. For this thesis, I follow the definition of:

social change as a change in society (a partial modification of relationships within a social structure or system) or, more radically, a change of society (a mutation that leads to building a new system that is different from the previous one), in which case the notion is closer to social transformation or even social revolution. (Jara, 2010, p. 289)

As I will outline in more detail in chapter 3.2, Paulo Freire's work refers to the notion of “transforming social reality” as well.

Furthermore, Jara mentions the different scopes of social change which can occur at the individual, group or social level (2010, p. 289). With reference to my research interest in assessing the potential of community communication to bring about social transformation, I consider a change of representations or narratives of favelas as the necessary step before a change in social reality can happen.

For determining the impact of social change or transformation, an important consideration is whether social change is understood in a materialistic or idealistic way. With respect to community media, it is important to clarify whether social change is induced by (a)

altering the “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1995) through changing the narratives and representations of favelas as well as therewith connected discourses and transported symbolic meanings, or by (b) a change through the transformation of structures as proposed by Sartoretto (2016).

Activism and Mobilization

For Sartoretto, media activism¹⁷ goes beyond the mere aspiration to change common discourses in the media, but also includes a structural change:

One aspect that sets media activism apart from other areas of activism is that while activists and social movements use media and relate to media as mediators of communication, media activism has a goal to change the structure or flow of communication. (Sartoretto, 2016, p. 276)

With this, she illustrates the “multiplicity of social changes [...] that are caused intentionally by actors, subjects and agents who drive various modifications” (Jara, 2010, p. 289).

Thus, looking at the concept of media activism can also contribute to finding elements of community communication which are evoking social change or transformation. In addition to Paiva’s (2003) emphasis on participation and citizenship enactment and awareness building, Custódio’s (2016) notion of “favela media activism” adds the importance of mobilization:

favela media activism is the individual and collective actions of favela residents in, through and about media. These contesting actions derive from and/or lead to the enactment of citizenship among favela residents. By engaging in media activism inside, outside and across favelas, favela residents raise critical awareness among peers, generate public debates, and mobilize actions against or in reaction to material and symbolic consequences of social inequality in their everyday lives. (Custódio, 2016, pp. 82–83)

Custódio further claims:

An important characteristic of favela media activism is that it is part of and contributes to the formation of counterpublics that contest the dominant discriminatory representations and policies against the favela population. (Custódio, 2016, p. 83)

¹⁷ At this point, I would like to briefly address that I consider social movements as linked to activism as they aim at directly influencing policy making and governments. Therefore, I understand community media initiatives only as grassroot organizations that can become part of a social movement, but not as “being” a social movement. Accordingly, I call the residents engaged in community media initiatives “community journalists” or “community communicators” instead of “activists” as my interviewees referred to themselves with these terms. This will also become clearer by looking at their motivations to engage in community media initiatives, later in chapter 5.1.

In these passages, he mentions the representational dimension that social transformation through community communication should address.

Empowerment and Enactment of Citizenship

Rodríguez (2001) contributes to the understanding of the different factors of community communication that induce social transformation. She refers to an enactment of citizenship that is facilitated through the access to media and information technologies which enable citizens to create their own content. This becomes clear in her definition of “citizens’ media”:

First that a collectivity is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established media-scape; second that [citizens’] media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities, and institutionalized social relations; and third, that these practices are empowering the community involved. (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 20)

Rodríguez’s formulation emphasizes the transformational effect of the participation of residents of marginalized communities in community media production that reflects their experiences of oppressive factors. She further highlights that this enactment of citizenship constitutes a form of empowerment.

To sum it up, the different approaches to alternative media contribute to understanding of which aspects of community communication lead to social transformation, both along the representative as well as the structural dimension. These transformational aspects are: enactment of citizenship, awareness building, activism, mobilization and empowerment. These terms are already hinting at the terminology that Paulo Freire uses for his approaches to bring about change, which I will explain in the next section.

3.2 Paulo Freire’s Contribution to Community Communication

Having, in the previous chapter, defined the term “community communication” and elaborated on its potential to trigger “social transformation”, I will now draw the connection to the work of Paulo Freire and explain its usefulness for understanding the emancipatory work of community journalists for their local initiatives in Rio de Janeiro.

Popular education theories, with a political character that are still impacting the discussion on political education across the globe, have been elaborated on by Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire who share some common ideas and complementary thoughts on how to reach liberation from hegemonic or oppressive situations (see Mayo, 2006). It is imperative to see both of their works in their historical and political contexts of origin.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) developed political education concepts in prison to revolt against the Italian fascist regime and formulated his theory of hegemony and power, to which this work also refers by utilizing the Gramscian terminology of “counter-hegemony”.

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is widely recognized as the most important scholar for “critical pedagogy” and is known for his “*educação popular*”-concepts on literacy as an emancipatory political project (Giroux, 1987, p. 7) which eminently focus on awareness building elements for possibilities of social change (Faschingeder & Novy, 2007, p. 4). Being born in Pernambuco, the poorest region in Brazil, and having to experience poverty and oppression, including the forced exile after 1964, have shaped his thinking.¹⁸ Even though Freire’s work is often reduced to his alphabetization programs for the poor, the significance of his work is much ampler than that. This thesis will give consideration to Freire’s broader intention of “political alphabetization” for “reading the world” rather than the mere word (Mayo, 2006, p. 76).

Due to its embeddedness in the Brazilian context, this thesis focuses on Freire’s work “*Education: The Practice of Freedom*” (1976)¹⁹ in which he addresses the raising of critical consciousness, and on “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*” (2014)²⁰ in which he combines the act of awareness building with the political struggle of the lower classes.

Paiva, too, emphasizes Freire’s influence on scholarship in the field of critical communication which justifies the important role that his theories play in this thesis: “Paulo Freire norteou todas as pesquisas em comunicação mais crítica no Brasil e na América Latina. Tudo que surgiu foi depois dele” (Paiva, 2017).

Moreover, Freire is relevant for this thesis as he supported the struggle of the marginalized population. Especially his conscientization and emancipation concepts are helpful for understanding the strategies and impact of community media initiatives.

¹⁸ See Paulo Freire’s autobiographical reflection in “Pedagogy of Hope” (2004), originally published in Portuguese: „*Pedagogia da Esperança*“ (1992)

¹⁹ Originally published in Portuguese: “*Educação como Prática de Liberdade*” (1967)

²⁰ Originally published in Portuguese: “*Pedagogia do Oprimido*” (1970)

3.2.1 Conscientization Through Critical Thinking

The following part of this thesis examines Freire's notion of "conscientization" and depicts how his ideas on emancipation from dominant elites, on the combination of action and reflection and dialogue relate to the practices of community media.

Cultural Invasion by Dominant Elites

One important element of the "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" is the "existential duality" by which Freire refers to the identification of the "oppressed" with the norms, ideas and needs of the "oppressors" (see Freire, 2014). By manipulation of discourses and practices, the dominant elites try to subsume the "oppressed" and to impose their objectives on them, which Freire calls "cultural invasion" (Winckler, Sitia Fornari, Herz Genro, & Carraro, 2007, p. 22).

If Freire's terms are applied to the theme of this thesis, then national elites that govern the mainstream media, can be conceptualized as the "oppressors" and the community journalists, as part of the marginalized population that is participating in the production of community media, can be understood as the "oppressed". Drawing on Gramscian terminology, community media is thus acting as a counter-hegemonic force to mainstream media.

The fact that favelas are the spaces where exclusion from public services and state oppression by police forces take place, justifies the understanding of social oppression as linked to a specific territory. As outlined in the introductory chapter and further extended in chapter 4, favela residents historically have been faced with social oppression and are the victims of a socially stigmatizing representation by mass media.

Community communication then tries to challenge the domination of the discourses of the elites which are disconnected from the social reality of the "oppressed", as Freire states:

The dominant elites [...], can - and do - think without the people. [...] Consequently, any apparent dialogue or communication between the elites and the masses is really the depositing of 'communiqués,' whose contents are intended to exercise a domesticating influence. [...] If the elites were to think with the people, the contradiction would be superseded and they could no longer dominate. (Freire, 2014, p. 131)

Thus, community communication and media can be seen as a means to emancipate from the cultural imposition by the mainstream media exerted through hegemonic power by

the national elites and to overcome the objectified and dehumanized status of the “oppressed”.

Conscientization

According to Freire, self-determination from oppressive structures allows the “oppressed” to become subjects and protagonists of their existence. It requires an awareness of the personal situation in addition to the understanding that reality is changeable, as well as the conscious decision to take action in order for social transformation to occur:

Just as objective reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If humankind produce social reality (which in the 'inversion of the praxis' turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for humanity. (Freire, 2014, p. 51)

At this point, I want to refer back to Jara’s (2010) understanding of social transformation as a change of society, discussed in 3.1.2. In my perception, Freire’s thoughts are in line with Jara as Freire also considers social transformation a way of challenging dominant elite power and revolutionizing existing class structures.

Freire therefore defines the process of “*conscientização*” or conscientization as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 35).

According to Freire, people build their consciousness through the interrelations of three different levels of consciousness which are formed by immersing and emerging into people’s reality. In “*Education: The Practice of Freedom*” (1976), Freire explains these three different levels of consciousness:

- 1) *Intransitive consciousness*: reduces human action to mere reaction.
- 2) *Transitive consciousness*: is still naive as it comprises a superficial view of reality and restrains the view from a global perspective. Things are not analyzed according to their causes but, instead, rely on magical explanations of reality which leads to fragmentary argumentations. Dialogue helps to develop a transitive consciousness which begins to challenge the magical assumptions.
- 3) *Critical transitivity*: seeks for deeper analyses and interpretations of problems, drawing on causalities. The own responsibility to generate knowledge about the world is recognized.

The highest level of attaining a critical consciousness can be reached by dialogue in order to become aware of a social consciousness which generates collective knowledge and existence (Winckler et al., 2007, pp. 18–19).

Action and Reflection

Yet, Freire emphasizes that only developing the critical consciousness for the liberation from domination, is not enough for becoming a subject. Conscientization has to be combined with revolutionary actions:

It is when the majorities are denied the right to participate in history as Subjects that they become dominated and alienated. Thus, to supersede their condition as Objects by the status of Subjects - the objective of any true revolution - requires that the people act, as well as reflect, upon the reality to be transformed. (Freire, 2014, p. 130)

This statement further exemplifies that both “action and reflection” are needed for the process of conscientization. If the word is deprived of its action, only pure verbalism remains, because: “there is no transformation without action” (Freire, 2014, p. 87). Likewise, “if action is emphasized exclusively, to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into activism” (Freire, 2014, p. 88).

Dialogue

With his concept of dialogical education that formulates problems, Freire presents another important idea. “Dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflections and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed” (Freire, 2014, pp. 88–89).

The dialogical communication in Freire’s approach can not only be understood as postulating the participatory aspect for communication (see Servaes, 2008) but also as a necessary condition for community communication to enter into dialogue with the “oppressors” – in this case the content of the mainstream media. “Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (Freire, 2014, pp. 92–93).

The importance of dialogue and education is also recognized by Paiva. Her following formulation depicts that these elements are central for community communication and linked to the transformation of reality. Thereby she illustrates the link to Freire’s ideas of the importance of recognizing the individual’s role in relation to the world and its historical and changeable reality, as outlined above:

Um veículo comunitário deve valorizar a cultura local, prestigiando suas formas. Deve necessariamente fomentar a participação da população tanto em projetos urbanos quanto no próprio veículo. Promover a educação é ainda uma das principais diretrizes, especialmente por se tratar de lugares onde o acesso às instituições formais de ensino ainda é bastante reduzido. Entretanto, é preciso enquadrar essa preocupação educacional no propósito de entendimento do próprio cotidiano e da capacidade de transformá-lo. (Paiva, 2003, p. 145)

3.2.2 Emancipation and Empowerment Through Action

Emancipation

The previously described main elements and concepts of Freire's emancipatory political education approach, as relevant for this thesis, show that Freire himself is utilizing the term of "transformation of social reality" and addresses the "cultural domination of the elites". This understanding now allows for elaborating on the reasoning behind the argumentation stating that counter-hegemonic representations in the media can lead to social change.

Both the concept of community communication as well as Freire's emancipatory postulations, incorporate a process of awareness of the own situation and the conscious decision to engage in its transformation. This is exactly what the community journalists do with their production of community narratives.

Moreover, the importance of participation in community media projects echoes in Paulo Freire's work as he sees the participation in the knowledge creation process as the key for understanding one's own reality and for inducing social change.

It is important to note that the mere awareness of the oppressive situation and the inner subjective transformation alone, does not yet lead to the liberation of the "oppressed" and to a concrete change of reality. This inner awareness needs to be coupled with an analysis of the social structures and a subsequent action and enactment of citizenship (Winckler et al., 2007, p. 12).

Empowerment

This condition also becomes clear in Higgins formulation of Freire's understanding of empowerment as

becoming aware of one's self and, through extension, of others and society in relation to the self. Higher levels of empowerment move beyond mere recognition to attempts to act

upon the new awareness, including active attempts to change power relationships within the spheres of self, others, and society. (Higgins, 1999, p. 637)

By mentioning the intentions dedicated to the change of power relationships, Higgins emphasizes Freire's contextual understanding of emancipation, as the interrelations that inhibit an emancipatory praxis should not be ignored. This is the point where this thesis ties in as a main critique of existing research's failure to analyze the emancipatory projects of community media in conjunction to its embeddedness in mainstream media's power structures. The next chapter 4 will be dealing with this issue.

3.3 Strategies for Democratization and Social Transformation

For the realization of such a social change that turns into a wider transformation of the social reality, structural issues have to be targeted as well. In the following, I will therefore outline what the suggestions of literature are for addressing the democratization of media as linked to new media's possibilities and to the struggle for communication rights.

Democratization of Media

The scope of this thesis does not allow for an exhaustive discussion of the theme of democratization which would have to include a presentation of its foundation in democratic theory. Instead, Paulo Freire's thoughts on democratization are presented by citing the following statement:

The struggle for democracy is the centerpiece for the struggle for liberation. Yet it is also clear that democracy has different meanings for different peoples throughout the world. For some, it is synonymous with capitalism, the propagation of acquisitiveness and greed, the barbaric practices of colonialism, and conceptually opposed to socialism. For others, it is a process of achieving equality of social justice for all peoples through popular sovereignty. (Freire, 2014, p. XI)

According to Winckler et al., Freire's thoughts can be understood as similar to Boaventura Souza Santos's perception of democracy as a possibility for different power constructions (2007, p. 19). This suggests discussing how media democratization disputes existing power relations which is central for a Freirean understanding of social transformation as changes of structures in society.

Horizontal Possibilities of New Media

Contemporary research on community media and social movements has reviewed the constitution of power in new media. Castells (2009) regards new digital communication technologies as potential instruments of social change as they are more accessible for underprivileged groups with scarce resources. With reference to Nick Couldry's (2015) work on social media and the myth of "us", Markham summarizes Couldry's two identified risks with overvaluing the democratizing potential of new media:

First, assuming that social media is mirroring the wider political reality. Rather than being representations of reality, social media platforms are products of commercially designed, promoted and neoliberally managed. Second, considering social media platforms as the important mean in which politics happens is misleading and withdrawing attention from other important spaces of attention. (2016, p. 947)

Indeed, many social movement theorists omit the fact that social media businesses are constrained by political economy as well and especially social media is actually based on a similar business model just like mass media (Couldry, 2015, p. 619).

Nevertheless, as this research study examines the strategies of community media initiatives to counter their representation in mainstream media, Castells (2015) provides a good insight into the impact of communication on the process of symbolic and meaning construction:

There is, however, one feature common to all processes of symbolic construction: they are largely dependent on the messages and frames created, formatted and diffused in multimedia communication networks. Although each individual human mind constructs its own meaning by interpreting the communicated materials on its own terms, this mental processing is conditioned by the communication environment. Thus, the transformation of the communication environment directly affects the forms of meaning construction, and therefore the production of power relationships. (p. 6)

Castells further analyzes how power is exerted in nowadays „networked society“:

actors of social change are able to exert decisive influence by using mechanisms of power-making that correspond to the forms and processes of power in the network society, [b]y engaging in the production of mass media messages, and by developing autonomous networks of horizontal communication [...]. (Castells, 2015, p. 9)

His understanding differs from Rodríguez's (2001) conceptualization of power relations insofar that as she refers to the "offline space". She explains that they are dynamically and permanently changing and can be shifted if alternative media producers gain market access (Rodríguez, 2001).

Both definitions imply that the counter-narratives and counter-publics created by community communication can exert power and induce social changes through online activities as well as through disputing media market monopolies in the real world.

Communication Rights

Literature on alternative or community media often discusses democratization as linked to the struggle for communication rights.

Communication rights should be understood as the right to a diverse and inclusive media where the full spectrum of opinions and groups that are present in a given society are represented. Thus, the reach of communication rights goes beyond access to technologies. (Sartoretto, 2016, p. 279)

Hence, community communication and media are a means for self-representations for the communities and for creating counter-narratives that are opposed to the ones in the mass media. André Fernandes, the founder of ANF, emphasizes the importance of a plurality of voices for a democratization of media and even society:

Mas se você tem os fatos somente narrados por um elite, quando os fatos só são narrados por uma classe social, eu acho que a sociedade sai perdendo como tudo. (André Fernandes, 2018)

Referring to Gayatri Spivak's (1988) question of whether the "subaltern can speak", democratization has to be regarded as linked to the democratization of knowledge production as well. Mansell's quote below links this observation to Freirean terminology:

It is the effort of recognition of this reality beyond fixed knowledges, marginalized by dominant paradigms of knowledge, which I would suggest signals the foundational moment in Freirean pedagogies, the ethical effort to build dialogue with those whose voices have been silenced. In developing this position Freire's pedagogies reflect a primary commitment to the socially and politically oppressed, yet this oppression is not understood simply as exploitation, but is inherently epistemological, a response to the social, political, and historical silencing of knowledges. (Mansell, 2013, p. 31)

This means for the production of community media that engaging in community communication gives favela residents a voice. They can produce their own knowledge and communicate their representations of reality by constructing a counter-public space.

Possible Strategies

As this thesis's aim is to find out which current strategies local community journalists and media initiatives pursue in order to change their communal representations in the

media, I want to outline the respective propositions from academic literature in this section.

Although literature on strategies that described different representational strategies or general strategies for grass-root organizations to influence public opinion was scarce, I found some relevant contributions from social movement theory on strategies for democratization and social change. Summarizing this review, I was able to identify three different categories under which the strategies relevant for community media vehicles can be explained. These are the Internet and new media technologies, relation to mainstream media and policy changes.

- *Internet and new media for horizontalized production and distribution*

As already mentioned, new media and the Internet are by many scholars considered as an opportunity to horizontalize the production of media by allowing alternative media to emerge and dissolve the barriers for participation and access (see e.g. Castells, 2013). Others view it more critically, as it is considered as another means of censorship and in fact replicating the same business model of mass media, especially in the case of social media (see e.g. Couldry, 2015). Nonetheless, the fact that the Internet is one of the main means of divulgation of information nowadays, the appropriation of the new communication possibilities provided by the Internet is certainly an important strategy for community media initiatives to communicate their counter-representations.

- *Relation to mainstream media*

With respect to the strategies of alternative media and its relationship with mainstream media, Sartoretto claims that

media practices enacted by activist organi[z]ations can be divided into two main areas: construction of their own arenas that are aimed for communication between activists and as an alternative to mainstream media institutions; and development of relations with mainstream media institutions in order to advance their issues to a wider public. (Sartoretto, 2016, p. 275)

Accordingly, this means for community media initiatives' representational strategies that they can be divided into (a) strategies to communicate counter-representations of favelas outside mainstream media and (b) strategies to actively insert their counter-representations into mainstream media.

For the second category of strategies to actively infiltrate mainstream media's narratives, the case studies in the collected edition of de Jong et al. (2005a) provide a good overview

of the strategies that social movements implement in order to get their themes represented in the mainstream media. In her contribution, Ruiz (2005) specifically mentions two strategies that are relevant for this study: demonstrative events and internet pressrooms. According to Ruiz, they can help to establish a situation in which both activist groups and the mainstream media can work in relationship and not in opposition. For community media initiatives, that means that they can gain the attention of the mainstream media through organizing demonstrations or events of interest to the mainstream media which in turn allows community media initiatives to bring across the issues important to them.

- *Policy changes*

For the third category of strategies for inducing social change, Milan (2009) analyzes the conditions for social movements to bring about change:

Theory suggests that this is possible when there is a shift in the “political opportunity structure”, or an open window to influence policy making. Social movement scholars talk about “political opportunity structure” to describe the context in which social actors interact with institutions and policy stakeholders [...]. Public policy scholars also argue that possibilities for policy change are influenced by structural conditions. (Milan, 2013, pp. 309–310)

Understanding how to make use of “political opportunity structures” or “open windows” thus becomes relevant for the attempt of community media initiatives to influence policy makers, as part of the mobilization for communication rights (Milan, 2013, p. 308).

With respect to the obstacles that community media face when seeking access to international policy arenas, such as problems of admission and lacking resources, Milan (2013) proposes strategies to community media advocates that want to legitimate their demands within the transnational policy arena. She proposes to pursue the following policy niche strategies in short term: the cultural diversity niche to promote the local cultures; the media pluralism niche to promote media pluralism on the national, regional and local level; the media literacy niche for empowerment through horizontal communication, critical media literacy and use; and the social cohesion niche to promote dialogue. Milan is convinced that these strategies will allow a further legitimization of community media issues in the long run and lead to an acceptance of the community media realm by institutions (Milan, 2013).

While Milan’s global recommendations might be helpful for transnational policy changes, their possible implementation should be analyzed in concordance with the

special circumstances of the Brazilian context, as outlined above in chapter 4.1.1. It cannot be ignored that in the special case of Latin America, national elites want to avert any concession of their power and a change of the status quo, which further aggravates the unequal access (see Lugo-Ocando, 2008).

To summarize, the section above reviewed the theoretical propositions for possible strategies for community media to bring about social transformation through changed representations by making use of horizontal production possibilities as provided by new media, by disputing mainstream press and by influencing policy making. At this point, I want to emphasize the importance of understanding both democratization and social transformation as concerned with participation and enactment of citizenship in combination with bringing about structural changes which always involve a redistribution of power. This demonstrates the importance of analyzing community media within its structural embeddedness.

To summarize, this chapter has elaborated the theoretical framework for analyzing this thesis's research problem of community media's strategies for changing stereotypical favela representations from an interdisciplinary perspective by combining literature's definitions of community communication and media, Paulo Freire's concepts for building critical consciousness, and literature's suggestions for strategies for social movements to bring about social transformations.

Chapter 4 will now contextualize the research topic by foregrounding the conditions of a highly monopolized Brazilian media-scape through which existing socio-economic inequalities are aggravated, which conditioned the emergence of community media and social mobilizations for more inclusive media policies. Moreover, the second part of the next chapter will describe which stereotypical representations of favelas are constructed in the media and how mechanisms in news coverage about favelas contribute to this. Finally, I will broach the issue of the negative impacts of such stereotypical representations on favela residents to comprehend the importance of the research problem.

4 Understanding the Local Context: Brazilian Media-scape and its Perpetuation of a Hegemonic Favela Narrative

“Favelas are complex places; their coverage needs to allow for that complexity too.”

(Catalytic Communities, 2016)

4.1 Media Monopolies and Counter-Powers in Brazil

4.1.1 Monopolized Media Market Controlled by Elites

This sub-chapter looks at the framework of “political economy of communications” since it helps to understand this thesis’s research context of a monopolized media market controlled by elites which conditions hegemonic favela narratives.

The disciplinary field of political economy of communications analyzes community media from a critical structural viewpoint and with respect to its democratization potential. It is explicitly examining power relations in the media production, i.e. the ownership structures, and the relationships between political and media power (Wasko, 2004).

The Latin American media-scape is characterized by alliances between media enterprises and elites. This is due to the fact that national elites have refrained from posing strict regulations for media businesses in exchange for control over political content (Fox, 1990; Lugo-Ocando, 2008).

Privatization, the removal of cross-media ownership restrictions and the liberalization of new media industries resulted in concentration, conglomeration and transnationalization. (Kitzberger, 2017, p. 233 after Fox and Waisbord, 2002; Mastrini and Becerra, 2006)

For the Brazilian mass media market, this means that the concentrated ownership structure “directly affects the free flow of news and information and obstructs pluralism” (Reporters Without Borders, 2013, p. 6). A joint investigation of the NGO *Intervozes* and Reporters Without Borders analyzed the 50 most important Brazilian media outlets and the 26 corporate groups owning them. The investigation reveals that:

Five groups or their individual owners concentrate more than half of the outlets: 9 belong to *Grupo Globo*, 5 to *Grupo Bandeirantes*, 5 to the Macedo family (taking into account *Grupo Record* and *IURD*’s outlets, both belonging to the same owner), 4 to the regional-scale *Grupo RBS* and 3 to *Grupo Folha*. (Media Ownership Monitor Brazil, 2017)

Although the *Código Brasileiro de Telecomunicações* defines legal restrictions for the ownership of television or radio broadcasting, the families that monopolize the market distribute the ownership of different broadcasting companies amongst their family members in order to avoid legal prosecutions (Paiva, 2003, pp. 158–160).

In addition, a study of Reporters Without Borders (2013) reveals that even though the Brazilian legislation prohibits politicians from becoming media owners, there are politicians that own stations affiliated to the national networks. Furthermore, the study shows that despite the secular nature of the Brazilian state, a religious overtaking of TV and broadcasting stations has taken place. These religious TV programs and broadcasters that define themselves as “community media”, even though their ends are linked to the transmission of their religious beliefs.

The Macedo family, for instance, is a good example for the interweaving of political functions, media business ownership and religious activity in Brazilian mass media. The Protestant bishop, Edir Macedo, controls the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* evangelical church and owns *TV Record* which has, after *TV Globo* and *SBT*, the highest viewer rankings (Media Ownership Monitor Brazil, 2017). Additionally, the Macedo family also

dominates an important political party, the *Partido Republicano Brasileiro* (PRB), which currently has one minister in the federal government, one senator, 24 federal deputies, 37 state deputies, 106 mayors and 1,619 council[or]s. (Media Ownership Monitor Brazil, 2017)

Another prominent example of the problematic power concentration and political influence on mass media is *Rede Globo*. Without opening the discussion of how political elites utilize media for electoral campaigns, it is useful to exemplify the case of the media conglomerate *Rede Globo* in Brazil in order to underline the argumentation of this thesis, which states that hegemonic structural conditions in media production reinforce certain discourses on favelas in the interest of the ruling class (see Lacerda, 2014, p. 91).

To illustrate *Rede Globo*’s power to influence public opinion, it has to be mentioned that *TV Globo* dominates almost 40% of the national television audience, as the joint investigation unveiled. The media conglomerate also owns one of the most influential Brazilian newspapers *O Globo* and has a large chain of radio stations (Media Ownership Monitor Brazil, 2017). Academia criticized the business’s involvement with the military

regime from 1964 until 1985 and its later ensured legitimacy with the new civilian regime (Fox, 1990; Guimarães & Amaral, 1990).

4.1.2 Emergence of Community Media as a Counter-Hegemonic Force

This section briefly outlines which conditions contributed to the constitution of community media as both a material and ideologic counter-hegemonic force against the monopoly of the traditional mass media controlled by the ideology of political elites:

Weak public and civic media, commercialization, conglomeration, persistent control by conservative elites and audience concentration have resulted in a mediated public sphere with a lack of diversity, inequalities in access, and content that – given the commercial, corporate and class incentives that govern content production – reflects the views and interests of elites and powerful groups in society. (Hughes & Prado, 2011)

In Latin America, community communication began to evolve during the 1970s (Paiva, 2003, p. 146) as a response to this historical exclusion of marginalize groups from media coverage and media production. In the case of Brazil, the exclusionary society is clearly connected to the country's slave history and issues of racism still condition the current circumstances. Brazilian community radios emerged during the military dictatorship in the 80s and were often linked to the Catholic Church (Paiva, 2003, p. 147).

In my interview with Paiva (2017), she stated that there were many clandestine community radios emerging that were operating without official broadcast permissions at that time. According to her, community communication and media evolved within the struggles against social inequalities and in search for social changes. Paiva mentioned the thenceforward developing media literacy and education projects which have unanimously been based on the critical pedagogical concept of Freire and served the emancipatory struggles of underprivileged groups.

Within the democratic transition period in the 1980s, many community initiatives with different media formats began to emerge. Under the name of “*comunicação popular*”, they were aimed at promoting the “oppressed peoples' participation” in communication processes in order to raise critical awareness, foster their mobilization and political education as well as cultural expression (Peruzzo, 2004).

4.1.3 Media Policy Reforms in Latin America and Mobilizations in Brazil

Beside the emergence of community media as a counter-hegemonic and transformative force, social activist groups and organizations also mobilized against the monopolistic power structures of the media. Together with media reform policies, the mobilizations of civil society will be addressed in this chapter in order to examine how they present a counter-force to traditional media power structures and how they can provide connecting points for the struggle of the community media initiatives for social transformations (see chapter 5.2).

In his revision of the Latin American media policy agenda for media democratization, Philip Kitzberger's (2017) attests the agenda's orientation towards pluralism and freedom of expression which evolved from the context of re-democratization and political shifts to the left in the 2000s and as a response to structural inequalities in the media-scape. Nevertheless, political and economic elites who still rely on alignments with media and the polarized politics in the region constitute the major obstacle for the media reforms' sustained success, Kitzberger resumes.

His findings allow for deductions for the Brazilian case. In Kitzberger's (2017) view, the coalition of national social mobilizations and transnational activism contributed to forming advocacy networks beyond national borders which allowed them to insert their claims into windows of political opportunity.

In Brazil, the *Fórum Nacional pela Democratização da Comunicação* (FNDC) acts as

an example of an organi[z]ation working to change the structure of the media landscape in the country. The Forum is a pool of civil society organi[z]ations that campaign for a range of issues within the framework of democrati[z]ation of communications, such as network neutrality, prohibition of media ownership by politicians and changes in the legal framework that regulates community radios. (Sartoretto, 2016, p. 276)

The FNDC is already active since the 1990s and has dedicated itself to the defense of communication rights. It has pushed the debate for freedom of expression and supports the initiative for a "*Lei da Mídia Democrática*" (FNDC, 2018). Although this thesis's aim does not involve the broader discussion of different institutions that engage in the democratization of the media-scape in Brazil, FNDC is an important actor to mention. Its building of advocacy networks with the participation of civil society organizations and

mobilizations will become relevant for the analysis of the community media's strategies later in chapter 5.2.4.

In recourse to the case of *Rede Globo*, it also serves as one recent example for civil society mobilizations against the monopoly of mass media. In 2016, many civil society actors collectively denounced *Globo's* role in accelerating the impeachment of Brazil's democratically elected president Dilma Rousseff.²¹ Adversaries of *Rede Globo* also direct their complaints at the concentration of ownership and interlacing of political and economic power centers of the media system in Brazil which has never been challenged since the end of the military dictatorship, say dos Santos and Lopes (2018). They criticize that even under the more progressive governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff from the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), no efforts have been undertaken to restructure this monopolized media-scape (see also Reporters Without Borders, 2013).²²

Not only FNDC's engagement for a democratization of media on the national level, but also initiatives on the federal level serve as examples for examining how windows for political opportunity can be taken advantage of for debating new legislator frameworks that support community media.

In fact, on the 9th of November 2017, I assisted a debate that was hosted in the city council chamber with a municipal councilor and representatives from community media initiatives and NGOs to discuss community communication in the light of a democratization of the media-scape.²³ The resulting idea was to follow the example of a new law issued by the city council in Niterói which distributes 30% of the city council's advertising budget to alternative and community media. The common consensus of the public debate was that this new law, that designates a certain percentage of public funding to community media, could stimulate the emergence of further community media vehicles and could even turn into a nation-wide reference.²⁴

²¹ Another noteworthy example for collective mobilizations are the massive street protests in June 2013, since which protests were increasingly directed against *Rede Globo* and the traditional media-scape, and during which the alternative media outlet *Mídia Ninja* (2018) evolved.

²² Research by dos Santos and Lopes (2018) reveals that this omission to invest in public television instead of private television (the amount invested in *TV Globo* was over 18 times higher than the sum invested in publicity in *TV Brasil* (p.147)) is regarded as PT's decisive mistake because *Rede Globo* is accused to have manipulated public opinion during Rousseff's impeachment process (Al Jazeera (2017)).

²³ See Gouveia (2017) for a summary of the event.

²⁴ See Roxo (2017) for a summary of the public debate.

According to the study “*Direito a Comunicação e Justiça Racial*” (2014) by the *Observatório de Favelas*, there are no public policies aimed to stimulate alternative communication in Brazil. As an example, the study reveals that the *Secretaria Especial de Comunicação Social da Presidência da República* (SECOM) concentrates 70% of funds from the federal government on advertising on just ten media outlets. These facts demonstrate that a restructuring of the governmental funding structures could support the democratization of the media-scape as it would redistribute economic power.

4.2 Genealogy of the Favela Narrative and its Impacts

4.2.1 Stereotypical Representations of Favelas in the Media

Having examined the structural conditions of the media-scape and political conditions relevant for examining the role of community communication and community media in the previous sub-chapter, in this part of the thesis, I will present how and which stereotypes about favelas are constructed by mainstream media.

Many Brazilian and foreign scholars have contested the common negative representations of favela residents in mainstream media, mainly television and newspapers (Mattos, 2010, 2007; Paiva & Nóra, 2008; Penglase, 2007; Rocha, 2007), or even in photographic portrayals (de Lima, M. H. T. & Carminati, 2008). These media representations can be held responsible for the theoretical production of favela stereotypes (Paiva & Nóra, 2008, p. 26). The resulting social construction of prejudices against favelas and their residents can be better understood by looking at the historical development of the myth of a city divided into favela and non-favela neighborhoods (Perlman, 2010) and by understanding the mechanisms of the formation of public opinion, societal imaginaries and stereotypes.

Although this thesis concentrates mainly on news reporting on favelas, with its main focus on the analysis of representational narratives and discourses in written news media, it still recognizes the importance of favela representations in other visual media, such as in Brazilian *telenovelas* (see La Pastina, Rêgo, & Straubhaar, 2003).

Stereotypes

Within this research paper, stereotypes are understood in accordance with Homi Bhabha (2012), who regards a stereotype as the mechanism that isolates the 'Other' and thus maintains distance between different societies or even within the same society.

Stereotypes act within the field of cultural subjugation but demonstrate themselves in concrete practices.

Mainstream media “makes the whole process [of stereotyping] seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible” (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992, p. 374). Amaral Filho calls this the “naturalization” by media and society of what otherwise would be considered as “abnormal”:

A naturalização do terrível só pode emergir com o uso nocivo de esterótipo no discurso social, no mundo feito em linguagem; por outro lado, o esterótipo é sim, um poderoso instrumento comunicante. (Filho, 2008, p. 76)

He further illustrates how social imaginaries are replicated:

o imaginário social padronizado identifica exatamente isso - um padrão que, como categoria homogeneizante, só nos permite codificar o estereótipo com o qual fomos ensinados a nos comunicar. (Filho, 2008, p. 81)

These mechanisms help to understand how the representation of favelas are being inserted into the hegemonic narrative about them which, in turn, results in the social creation and preservation of stereotypes (Paiva & Nóra, 2008, p. 19). In a dogmatic way, favelas are constructed as being one singular and unequivocal category, “the spaces of the poor”, while the many differences between various favelas, as well as within one single favela, are often ignored (Gondim, 2006, p. 487; after Valladares, 2005). The most prevalent stereotypes that are reiterated by mass media will be presented in the following.

Favela Stereotypes: Violence

Since the 1980s, armed drug gangs began to establish themselves in the favelas. As the state’s presence has always been very sporadic there, they filled this power vacuum which led to a criminalization of Rio’s favelas and its inhabitants in the public discourse (da Silva, L. A. M., 2011).

The sociologist Alice Perlman, who researched the development in the favelas for over 40 years, describes the effect that this “physical” and “symbolic” criminalization has had on the favela residents:

Violence follows poverty [...] Although only a small fraction of favela residents are involved in the arms or drug traffic, the drug trade and the police response have been responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people in the favelas. [...] The violence has made Rio’s most vulnerable population fearful of going about their daily lives, reduced their chances of getting jobs, lowered the value of their homes, weakened

the trust and solidarity that has held their communities together, and co-opted homegrown community organizations. (Perlman, 2010, pp. 165–166)

By 2008, the *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* (UPPs) were installed to officially gain state control over strategic favela territories before the mega-events (FIFA World Cup 2014 and Olympic Games 2016) (Lacerda & Brulon, 2013). News reporting also began to divide favelas into “pacified” and “non-pacified” favelas by talking about culture and entrepreneurship in the “pacified” favelas while reporting on the control of drug gangs and crimes in favelas without the installation of the UPPs (Custódio, 2016, p. 74). However, the success of the UPP program is heavily questioned as it has only led to a reduction of crimes in smaller favelas and provoked heavy human rights violations (Mesker, 2014).

Favelas as spaces of deficits and problems

Another approach that is often used by the media to talk about favelas and that gives them negative representation, is the “discourse of absenteeism” (Paiva & Nóra, 2008, p. 22). According to the coordinators of the Rio-based NGO *Observatório de Favelas* (de Souza e Silva, J. & Barbosa, 2005), the favela has always been defined by what it was lacking: as a place without urban infrastructure, i.e. no fresh and used water sanitation or garbage collection, and as a place without order, moral, laws etc. In general, the favela has been constructed as a chaotic and miserable place, the coordinators say.

This homogenization of favelas as spaces of deficits has not only become part of the collective thinking of Brazilians but has also been adopted in official public reports (Lacerda, 2014, p. 77). It has inclusively guided public policies, as will be discussed later in 4.2.3.

4.2.2 Mechanisms Behind the Construction of a Hegemonic Favela Narrative

It is evident that the reason for the mainstream media’s contribution to the stereotypical favela representations lies not only in their control of the media market. It is also linked to their “*monopólio da fala*” (Granja Coutinho, 2008, p. 61) which comes with market monopoly. Hence, I will now explain how the negative narratives about favelas are constructed in the mainstream news coverage.

In an analysis of the representations of favelas in the most important printed journals (nation-wide *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Globo* and Rio-specific *O Dia*) from 2005-2006, the LECC research group at the Communication Department of the UFRJ investigated how the hegemonic favela narrative is constructed. Raquel Paiva and Gabriela Nóra (2008) found that 77,2% of the 645 articles by *O Globo* that were covering favelas, were emphasizing their negative aspects (p. 24). For the other two journals this scenario looked similar and in general, favelas were considered as criminal spaces, mostly linked to drug trafficking and violence (p. 15).

In a similar study later in 2011, the *Observatório de Favelas* analyzed 640 articles over six months from three major Brazilian mass media outlets (*O Globo*, *Extra*, and *Meia-Hora*). They also found that when covering favelas in this period:

Em todos os seis meses ‘violência, criminalidade e drogas’ foram os temas predominantes na construção das narrativas jornalísticas sobre estes territórios, chegando a corresponder a mais de 70% das pautas (de Souza e Silva, J. & Ansel, 2012, p. 33).

Paiva and Nóra (2008) also analyzed which specific underlying mechanisms of news coverage about favelas lead to these places being attributed to violence, drugs and crime. In the case of *O Globo*, the authors ascribe these attributions to the existing “Rio editorial” in which 71,6% of the articles on favelas are presented (p. 20). This editorial has a thematic focus on violence and the socioeconomic and structural issues of the state. On the one hand, they argue that editorials facilitate the division of themes in journals, but, on the other hand, this restricts the opportunities for articles on favelas to be analyzed from more interrelated viewpoints other than those provisioned by the “Rio editorial”. Hence, Paiva and Nóra summarize that apart from presenting the news facts, the articles on favelas mostly focused on details about the time-line of the crime, involved arms arsenal and the criminal’s relation to the community as well as their personal lives (p. 15). They further state that in the majority of the analyzed cases, the articles were written to capture the interest of the reader, often in a sensationalizing way, following the advertising and commercial logic of the press.

Enquanto os leitores acompanham o enredo construído em torno da vida dos traficantes, uma outra narrativa passa despercebida e, com ela, questões relacionadas à ausência de políticas públicas e ao abismo construído em torno das diferenças sociais. (Paiva & Nóra, 2008, p. 19)

This illustrates the issue of the one-sided news coverage of favelas: the focus on mainly the structural, economic and social problems without any contextualization in a wider

context. Of course, as Paiva and Nóra argue, violence and crime does exist in the favelas and their expansion is a challenge for the economic activities of the state. Nonetheless, the journalistic coverage leaves aside crucial questionings of the existing conditions (Paiva & Nóra, 2008, p. 22).

Assim, os veículos de comunicação priorizam os aspectos negativos da realidade social desses grupos e concedem maior visibilidade aos acontecimentos, produzindo um discurso sobre os moradores dessas regiões como seres ameaçadores. Consequentemente, reforça-se a existência de uma sociedade cada vez mais fragmentada. (Paiva & Nóra, 2008, pp. 22–23)

4.2.3 Effects of Negative Favela Representations in the Media

This section explains why the de-construction of a hegemonic favela narrative by community journalists is important by addressing the main negative effects of stereotypical representations for favela residents.

Criminalization leads to Discrimination

This narrative of dangerous favela residents fosters their multi-faceted discrimination, as they “may already suffer discrimination for being black or *pardo*, uneducated, *nordestino* or simply poor” (Custódio, 2016, p. 73). What I experienced during my field research is that the negative favela representations manifest themselves in favela residents’ reactions in daily life, such as lying about their home address in social encounters or for seeking jobs.

Public Policies: Legitimization of Forced Evictions

In addition, the myth of the divided city provides the basis for public policies that are designed for the control of favelas by the state. The image of a society divided into binary categories of “favela” or “*morro*” and “*asfalto*”, i.e. the image of urbanized and organized parts of the city, is further perpetuated by the historical criminalization of favelas. This resulted in recurrent public policies which have been implemented in order to control the growth of favela areas, ever since the first law that officially prohibited the creation of new favelas in 1937 (Lacerda, 2014, p. 77; after Oliveira, 1985). As a result, “massive campaigns for eviction and demolition of poor houses” were enacted (Lacerda, 2014, p. 77).

Paiva and Nóra (2008) ascribe a decisive role for pushing the discourse on the necessity for the removal of favelas to the *O Globo* journal, as it talks about “*o problema da favelização*” (p. 21) as the problematic, uncontrolled process of expansion of favelas.

Police and Military Interventions for “Public Security”

To further the problematization of the “favela”-space, it has also been associated with the notion of “insecurity”. Accordingly, several studies have put a special focus on representations of public security policies and violence in the media (Ramos et al., 2017; Ramos & Paiva, 2007; Varjão, 2016).

In her Doctoral Thesis on the social construction of favelas in the mainstream media (focusing on *O Globo* and *Jornal do Brasil*), Carla Felix (2012) states that at the beginning of the decade of 1980, favelas have not been automatically associated with violence, even though the connection between poverty and crime was already drawn. Yet, poverty and crime were seen as results of an unequal society, she claims. Her research depicts that the notion of an inherent connection between favelas and violence emerged only in the 1990s when drug traffickers were perceived as a parallel power to the state and subsequently discussed under the terminology of “war”:

A Guerra do Rio, portanto, é uma construção discursiva, produzida nos anos 1990, que inaugura uma nova gramática a partir da qual os eventos em favelas – concebidos como o território inimigo – passam a ser narrados. (Felix, 2012, pp. 229–230)

According to Felix, the metaphor of “war” was later substituted with “terrorism” beginning in the year 2000. Even though the installment of the UPPs changed this notion slightly, the overall assumptions about favelas stayed the same (Felix, 2012, pp. 229–230). The director of ANF, André Fernandes, confirms this and expresses his concerns:

A favela sempre estava nas páginas policiais - o tempo todo. Meses atrás, um jornal da grande circulação, queria criar uma editoria de guerra para colocar os assuntos da favela em edital de guerra. Fui veementemente contra porque se sem dizer que estamos em guerra, nós já temos tantas mortes, truculência da polícia do jeito que é, imagina se a gente tiver uma editoria de guerra que passa referenciar que de fato estamos numa guerra. (André Fernandes, 2018)

Outsider Representations

The fact that mainstream media distributes news coverage for non-favela residents (Ramos & Paiva, 2007) is certainly a main structural reason for the unquestioning nature of coverage about favelas and public policies about them. This is due to the fact that controlling the favelas and maintaining their inferior status supports the interests of the

governing elites who want to keep their privileges in the highly unequal Brazilian society (see Hughes & Prado, 2011).

Accordingly, the community media initiatives from Rio's favelas present themselves as a means to self-representation, to de-construct the negative discourses and to "construct an identity by re-signifying the meaning of 'favela' as symbols of black and *nordestino* heritage and hard-working people" (Custódio, 2016, p. 81).

Favela Representations in International Media

For a full understanding of the effects of stereotypical favela representations, it is equally important to also analyze the impacts of international mainstream media's coverage of favelas. For this end, I will provide recent findings of the NGO CatComm which will be relevant for discussing the community media's relation with mainstream media in chapter 5.2.4.

As I have mentioned in chapter 2, CatComm has dedicated itself to encouraging the valorization of favelas and their residents through acknowledging and supporting their efforts for community developments and self-representation. Recognizing that

the media plays an important role in influencing those perceptions, whether by reinforcing, strengthening and perpetuating negative stereotypes or by challenging and gradually eroding them (Catalytic Communities, 2016),

CatComm has conducted a comprehensive study (2016) of the change of narratives about Rio's favelas in international mainstream media during the period of the mega-events. Hence, their study complements the findings of national representations about favelas which have been analyzed beforehand.

By tracking over 1,000 articles that mention favelas in eight English-speaking mainstream outlets from 2008 to 2016, CatComm's objective was to encourage

international journalists to take substantial steps towards ending the stigma around favelas by producing thoughtful and nuanced coverage about them, ultimately influencing the discourse, policies and initiatives around informal settlements around the world. (Catalytic Communities, 2016, p. 6)

The study depicts an immense expansion of the international mainstream media coverage of Rio's favelas during these eight years which was marked by an "a 16-fold increase in visibility for favela voices" (Catalytic Communities, 2016, p. 11). In figure 1 the sources

for these reports are illustrated and show that one quarter uses favela residents as informants.

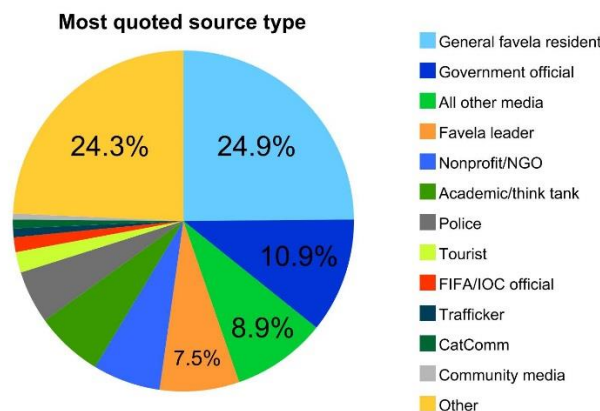


Figure 1: Quoted sources in international mainstream media coverage of favelas (Catalytic Communities, 2016, p. 21)

Figure 2 below depicts content-wise that:

For articles where favelas were the main subject, ‘violence or drugs’ was the most frequent topic mentioned followed by ‘police’ and ‘pacification.’ ‘Violence or drugs’ and ‘pacification or occupation’ were the most common main topics, culture,’ and ‘Evictions/removals.’ Over time, ‘violence or drugs’ was less commonly the main topic, but there was no decrease in how often it was a mentioned topic. In terms of who the articles portrayed as violent, there was an increase in articles that portrayed only police as violent. This demonstrates increasing attention to Rio and Brazil’s immensely high police killing rates as a newsworthy story in itself. There also appears to be a very small increase in the percentage of articles featuring positive topics such as community media and community-led social projects. (Catalytic Communities, 2016, pp. 10–11)

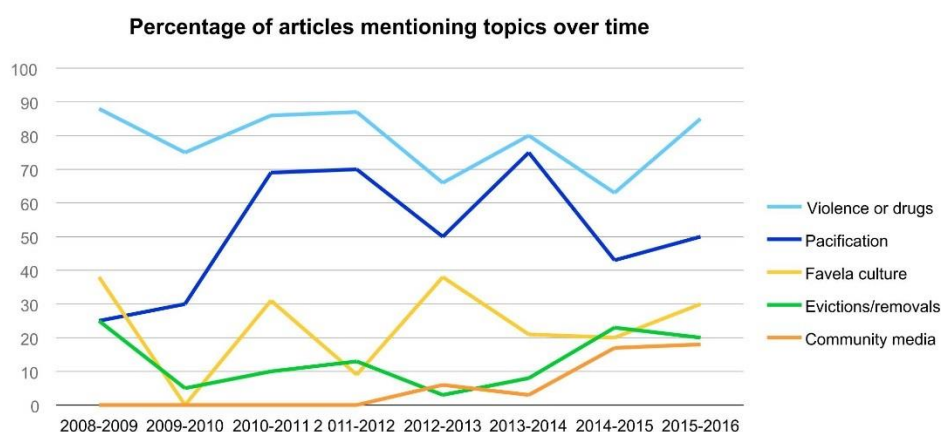


Figure 2: Topics over time in international mainstream media coverage of favelas (Catalytic Communities, 2016, p. 26)

According to CatComm’s follow-up study (2017), the approach of favela journalists, who wrote or co-wrote 17 articles (one in *The New York Times* and sixteen as part of *The*

Guardian's “View from the favelas” series²⁵), differs substantially from the international mainstream media’s approach for writing about favelas. The favela-authored pieces always mentioned a favela by name and never portrayed residents as the only perpetrator of violence. In addition, their study revealed that favela journalists preferred “community” or “neighborhood” to describe their homes, instead of “slum”. Moreover, favela authors portrayed their homes as “places with a sense of community” and favela residents primarily as “active agents of change” and “entrepreneurs”, instead of “financially poor” as the following figure 3 highlights.

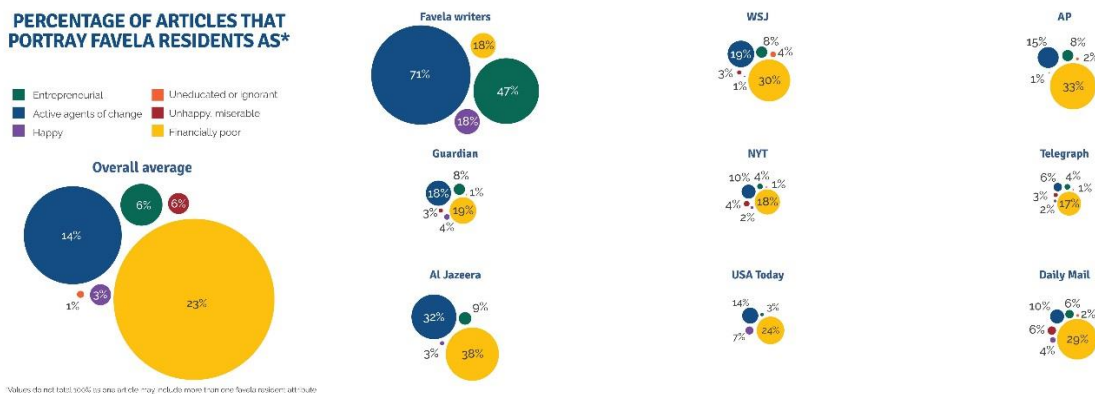


Figure 3: Portrayal of favela residents by international and community media (Catalytic Communities, 2017, p. 23)

As a result, figure 4 shows that the articles written by community journalists leave an overall neutral impression of favelas (with 64,7%), while 23,5% of the articles leave the reader with a positive favela image and only 11,8% convey an overall negative impression. This diverges significantly from the international mainstream media’s overall impression of their articles covering favelas as almost half of their articles leave a negative perception (45,8%).

²⁵ See the complete series on The Guardian (2017).

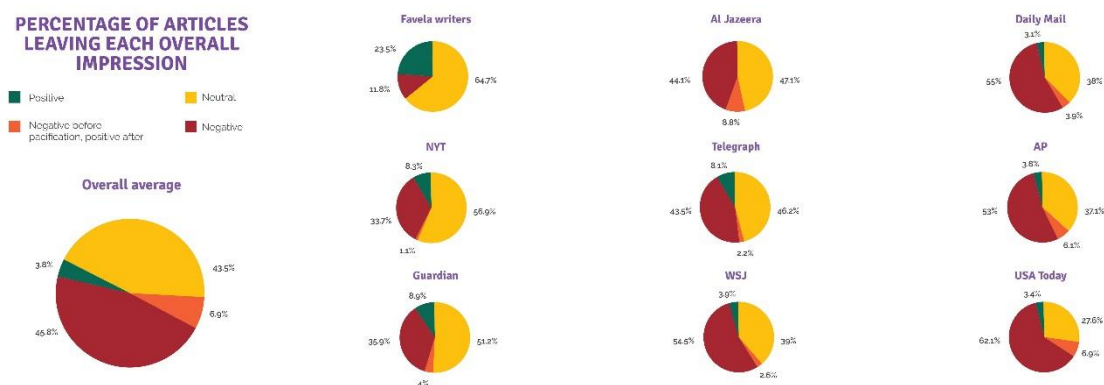


Figure 4: Overall impression of international media and community media coverage of favelas (Catalytic Communities, 2017, p. 11)

The results of this study are important as they demonstrate that a change in narratives and discourses about favelas is possible, even beyond the borders of Brazil.

In this chapter, I have analyzed how the monopolized media-scape in Brazil sustains the hegemonic narratives about favelas in Rio de Janeiro in the mainstream media even on an international level. Additionally, I described how these one-sided discourses maintain certain stereotypes about favela residents to the benefit of the power interests of the dominating classes. Moreover, I outlined the current efforts of advocacy networks to set the democratization of the media-scape on the media policy reform agenda.

In the next chapter, I will discuss my empirical data of the interviews with community communicators about their perspectives on strategies to change these negative representations, to achieve self-representative emancipation and to challenge the status quo of the mainstream media industry. Furthermore, I will relate the empirical findings to the theoretical propositions depicted in chapter 3.

5 Community Media in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas

“As mídias comunitárias eles mostram a realidade. Eu acho que não tem ninguém melhor para falar disso do que nós.”

(Community Journalist, 2018)

5.1 Community Journalists' Role for Social Transformation

5.1.1 Personal Motivation and Experiences

Be a Social Change Agent for Transformation

The interviews which I conducted during my field research from January to March 2018, involved favela residents that are engaged in a community media initiative. Two out of the seven community journalists that I interviewed founded a local community communication initiative and had personal experiences and motivations that led them to create their own page. In one case, it was the concrete personal threat of eviction and realization of a need for action that led her to create a Facebook page on which residents could fight for their rights and articulate their needs:

Ali que falei que vou criar uma página na internet e vou arrasar com o Perfeito. Aí comecei de falar sobre isso e de reclamar sobre a falta de serviços na Rocinha que o poder público não prestava. Os moradores soa cansados de sofrer com falta de água, por falta de luz, com o poder público vendo por acá só para pedir fotos. O morador está cansado de não ter com quem reclamar. Na associação de moradores não tem ninguém para te ajudar. Que dá raiva. Você vê tanta gente sofrendo e ninguém faz nada! (I-5)

In the other case, the interviewee explained his motivation to create a local news blog as originating from the desire to change the negative image that people have of his favela:

Para mostrar para as pessoas de fora que a Rocinha não é bem assim como na TV, no jornal eles falavam. Também de uma necessidade para mostrar que os moradores aqui, eles são cidadãos. Eles são pessoas normais. Não são bandidos como as pessoas imaginam. (I-6)

All other interviewees that collaborate in a community media initiative expressed their wish to change the negative representation and media narrative about favelas and find ways to emancipate themselves from coercive and discriminatory practices. For instance:

Acho que eu desejo mesmo que a gente chega ao ponto que nos deixamos de ser identificado pelas pessoas de fora como pessoas violentas, como pessoas que produzem violência, como pessoas submissas, pessoas que não são capazes. (I-1)

Eu quero mostrar a realidade que outros não mostram. Lutar por uma causa! (I-3)

Counter-Favela-Representation in (International) Mainstream Media

To understand this desire for seeing favelas more adequately represented in the media, it is indispensable to examine the perceptions of the mainstream media by the community journalists. All interviewees confirmed that the hegemonic narrative about favelas constructs them as violent places. Here is one interviewee's experience while trying to find reports to divulge about his favela:

Sempre quando eles vão falar de favela ou Rocinha, o qualquer outra favela, a maioria das matérias, a maioria dos textos, são textos que estão falando da violência que acontece nesses locais. [...] Nesse momento que estou cartando matérias - botei lá 4 palavras: Rocinha, favela, comunidade, favelado. Aí a maioria só falou de violência, violência, violência. (I-4)

He attributes this hegemonic coverage of favelas to the fact that “esses meios de comunicação sabem só essas informações da polícia. Eles não entram em contato com as pessoas que moram” (I-4).

This opinion reflects the observation made by Ramos and Paiva (2007) who claim that when reporting on crimes, mainstream media outlets only cite residents for more emotional statements but refer to official sources for facts and information whereas local community outlets use its residents as the main informants. Another interviewee contests the one-sided discourse on favelas that homogenizes and criminalizes their residents and that ignores a different social reality:

Se você pega toda a população da Rocinha, só 1% é traficante – tal vez na quantidade da gente que mora aqui seria até menos que 1%. O outro restante é trabalhador - tudo mundo levanta cedo cada dia. Isso eles não vem. Essa parte eles não tocam. É muito triste. (I-5)

Interestingly, some interviewees made a distinction between their perception of national and international mainstream media, in particular concerning their opinion of national and international journalists, when I asked about their experiences during the mega-events, which gained significant international media coverage. One interviewee explicitly highlighted that she perceived international mainstream journalists to be reporting in a less biased way than national mainstream journalists do:

Também a diferença de como eles tratam as informações de favelas, como a mídia comercial aqui, as grandes empresas de comunicação, elas criminalizam a nossa vida, a nossa informação. Então, como isso tem uma diferença discrepante muito grande. Como a gente percebe, o quanto preconceituoso são os jornalistas do Brasil e o qual livres de preconceitos que são os jornalistas de fora. (I-7)

This positive image of journalists from abroad is also reflected in the following statement which emphasizes the foreign journalists' willingness to listen to the opinion of favela residents:

Que eu gosto da mídia internacional é que eles são muito verdadeiros. Foi muito grande, a procura da gente nossa. Nós vimos correspondentes para eles porque eles buscavam outra forma do que as mídias aqui no Brasil. Eles tocavam muito o asfalto. Focaram muito no Parque Olímpico, a cidade. Eu vi que a imprensa estrangeira, ela focava muito nas favelas. *O que os moradores das favelas acharam disso?* Foi um momento em que sofreram muito disso - de expor a mídia estrangeira o que é fato, o que estava acontecendo. Que de fato, as pessoas acreditavam que a pacificação era para pacificar os morros, mas na verdade pacificou só o asfalto. Era para fazer que os bandidos não saíssem das favelas. A mídia estrangeira, ela dispôs isso de uma forma que nos ajudou muito. Eu tive uma aproximação muito forte com as pessoas de comunicação estrangeira. Foi tão forte de pegar essas pessoas e trazer para aqui na Rocinha. Foi muito legal. Eu tive essa confiança com as pessoas porque eles realmente publicavam o que eles viam. Eles ouviram os moradores. Foi legal. Não importa qual tipo de morador fosse - não só lideranças comunitárias mas o vendedor de frutas, por exemplo. (I-6)

It is important to highlight at this point that during the mega-events, several international mainstream media outlets sought the local community media initiatives as sources of hyper-local information. In one case mentioned by an interviewee, the English-speaking newspaper *The Guardian* gave three community journalists the chance to contribute to a series on favela residents' experiences during the Olympic Games: "Rio voices: our Olympic odyssey" (The Guardian, 2017). Although CatComm's study about international media coverage of favelas concluded that there is still a long way to go for an adequate representation of the social reality of favelas (Catalytic Communities, 2016), community journalists regard international journalists from foreign mainstream media as an opportunity to challenge the favela narratives and biased views of national mainstream journalists.

As shown above, the community journalists' perception of national mainstream media's one-sided focus on violence, prejudices, sensationalism as well as the default to include local voices into their reporting is echoed in scholars' contestation of the stereotypical, negative representations of favelas and their residents in the mainstream media (chapter 4.2). Confronting these negative favela narratives and fighting against discriminatory representations is one of the main drivers for an engagement in local community media journalism.

Promote Civic Engagement

Another motivating reason to start a community media initiative is the wish to function as a role model and to provoke civic engagement amongst fellow residents:

Eu quero mostrar para as pessoas que qualquer um pode lutar pelos seus direitos. Você joga um papel fundamental na formação da sociedade. Eu não sabia disso - eu aprendi. Eu queria passar isso para as pessoas também. (I-6)

Gain Job Experience

Most of the interviewees are either journalism students or graduates of audiovisual studies. Thus, one of their motivations to engage in community media production was the chance to gain professional experience. The fact that entering the job market at big media enterprises is very difficult for favela residents was an additional motivating factor for the creation of a community media initiative:

estava surgindo uma galera da favela que estava entrando pelo jornalismo e não conseguiu oportunidade nessas empresas de comunicação, tipo *O Globo*, *O Dia*. Aí a ideia era de dar oportunidade para essas universitários de favela. (I-4)

The various motives to create a community media initiative – denouncing stereotypical favela representations, fostering citizen’s engagement as well as offering practical job experiences – illustrate that the intrinsic motivation of these community journalists is not solely based on the desire to engage in the society and act as an agent of social change. This idealistic reason is often combined with a more practical incentive, i.e. to get better job opportunities.

5.1.2 Impact on their Lives and Self-Development

According to the interviewees, their engagement in community media initiatives has led to a greater personal network of contacts, acquisition of knowledge and skills that some have identified to be of more practical value than what they had learned at university. Thus, apart from a personal self-development, the engagement of the community journalists has also opened new job opportunities for them. Some could use their community media work as a reference. This experience also allows them to obtain the professional register required for working as a journalist in Brazil.

Empowerment through Critical Thinking

The work for a community media initiative can have major effects on the community journalists, such as becoming aware of their own previously unquestioned perceptions of

the social reality and the realization of a personal inner change. One interviewee states exemplarily: “Nossa, o meu pensamento mudou totalmente! Em muita coisa: questão de preconceito, racismo, feminismo. Agora eu mudei – antes não questionava” (I-3).

The constant reflection of the own reality involves developing a consciousness about what is relevant to the community journalist’s reality and what is important to communicate:

A gente já tem várias críticas positivas e negativas sobre muitas situações e sobre diferentes temas das favelas e das nossas próprias. Mas é diferente quando você passa e reflete todos os dias sobre o que você está vendo, sobre o que você está ouvindo, sobre o que você acha relevante falar ou não. Sobre o que é importante pelo resto do mundo ler. (I-7)

The engagement as a community journalist also leads to the important realization that the social reality is changeable, so Freire (2014), and that one can have an influence on it:

Então, você percebe que as coisas começam a fazer sentido e que elas tem um significado muito importante que elas são relevante, que elas podem mudar a sociedade, a realidade, a nossa realidade. (I-7)

One interviewee also highlights the importance of a critical analysis of the mainstream media and critical reflections about the everyday life through

olhar para história, pelo cotidiano, do que é dito, do que é lido, que é falado - e a partir fazendo análise disso, sabe. Se perguntando porque isso. Não só ouvindo e acreditando. [...]

Eu acho para a gente que constrói essa mídia, a constante rotina de alimentar o olhar crítico do mundo, do cotidiano para a favela. Acredito que é o que fique mais rico do que vai perpassar pelo nossas experiências pessoais e coletivos. (I-2)

Critical Media Analysis

Learning to read and think critically about the contents of mainstream media and how common representations are replicated in one’s own work is part of the community communication formation course of one initiative. The interviewee who is partially conducting the course explains his dialogical approach to provoke reflections on the produced texts:

Eu passo a aula de análise de conteúdo de mídias grandes [...] como poderia ser uma outra maneira de escrever aquele conteúdo. Então, quando eu vou fazer oficina, ou mesmo faço uma debate [...]: Vocês entendem o que vocês reproduzem? Vocês já fizeram análise crítica do que vocês produzem pelo outro contexto? Ou vocês só reproduziram o que vocês já creiam certo e acabou?

Normalmente é chocante - essas pessoas falam: Caramba, mas aí eu estou repetindo o que X falou. Mas você sabe que X está falando certo, sabe? (I-2)

His approach is similar to Freire's concept of dialogical pedagogy to generate self-reflection and mirrors Paiva's perception that the critical analysis of mass media is the necessary step that precedes the engagement in community communication:

A análise da produção veiculada pelos *mass media* é uma das etapas necessárias para a implantação de canais de comunicação alternativa. Essa etapa - de leitura crítica de mensagens - representa o momento em que a comunidade percebe por meio do que é divulgado diariamente nos veículos de comunicação existentes uma falta de relação com sua vida quotidiana. A elaboração de diagnóstico crítico alcança maior eficácia no instante em que o grupo constituído se dá conta do artificialismo das informações divulgadas. (Paiva, 2003, p. 138)

Paiva also indicates the importance of community media to promote a critical media literacy and ability to contextualize the own reality:

Os jornais comunitários seriam muito bem vindos. Mas eu acho que a gente deveria lutar contra o analfabetismo da população brasileira. Voltando ao Paulo Freire: não é só juntar as letras e ler em casa, mas é a capacidade de entender o que significa aquilo, não consegue interpretar a sua realidade. (Paiva, 2017)

As previously discussed in chapter 3.2, Freire's approach considers the highest level of empowerment to be action that challenges power relationships in society, based on awareness and self-reflection. Based on this definition, the engagement in community communication can be regarded as a form of empowerment for the community journalists. They train their ability for critical thinking with respect to analyzing the contents of mainstream media in a reflective process in relation to the recognition of the personal economic, political and social situatedness. In a second step, their self-expression of their own views on reality through the writing of articles or photography expresses the questioning of existing power relations in media representations.

Enactment of Citizenship through Participation and Mobilization

As described by Rodríguez, empowerment is connected to the enactment of citizenship by "actively intervening and transforming the established media-scape" (2001, p. 20). She connects the notion of participation and citizenship to the idea of collectivity. One interviewee comments on how his participation in the community media initiative contributed to his "feeling of being a citizen" and provoked his desire to mobilize his community members to enact their citizenship as well:

Eu madureci muito. Eu não me senti uma pessoa não só morador que usa Rocinha para comer e dormir. Eu me sinto um cidadão que eu posso lutar pelos meus direitos como morador da Rocinha. E é isso é que eu quero mostrar para as pessoas.

O problema é que a grande maioria dos moradores, eles não se sentem participativas. A gente faz as vezes reuniões de autoridades em busca de algumas soluções e os moradores não participam. Mas eu acho que é isso mesmo. Eles não tem esse conhecimento desse poder que eles tem como no sentido de cidadão. Porque a gente veio com o poder público, eles tratam a gente de uma forma tão ruim que acaba a gente achando que nós somos realmente nada. (I-6)

Literature's Overall Contributions

At this stage of the thesis, I want to shortly reflect on literature's contributions for understanding the findings from the qualitative interviews on the motivations and role of community journalists, which I formulated as one of my research sub-questions (see 1.3).

Paiva's description of how community communication turns community communicators into agents that can induce social change (Paiva, 2003, p. 49) and Jara's conceptualization of different levels of social change (2010, p. 289) can be conjointly applied to the findings from the interviews. Taken together, their conceptualizations explain how community journalists engage in communication and self-representation of their own reality at the individual level. Yet, community communicators also discuss their perceptions of reality in the collectivity through the community media production process, and their community communication to residents as well as to outsiders. This then induces reflections about existing favela narratives for a broader social group.

From the conducted interviews it became clear that the counter-representations of favelas are a main objective for the community media initiatives. Theory on the formation of counter-publics (see e.g. Custódio, 2016), as revised in chapter 3.1.1, and research on the construction of meaning in the online sphere (Castells, 2015, p. 6) depicted how counter-narratives of favelas ultimately lead to changed perceptions about these places and their residents. Accordingly, as literature has suggested that public debates on favelas influence practices, such as public policies (see Lacerda, 2014), counter-narratives about favelas eventually result in changed actions such a different, more favorable orientation of public policies. In Jara's view, this is then considered as a social change.

However, if Freire's conceptualization of social transformation is applied for examining the impact of community communication, then this implies a change of structures rather than a mere modification of social relationships (Jara, 2010, p. 288). Logically, this can only happen in the long-run owing to the required change of structures which implies challenging deep-rooted racism, clientelism and elitism in the case of the Brazilian society.

In short, talking about social change means talking about the change for the marginalized which starts at the individual level, surpasses the group level and finally impacts society as a whole. Community communication is aimed at inducing social transformations as it disputes public perceptions of the marginalized and wants to combat their discrimination. This effect can only be achieved on a long-term perspective as it requires profound changes of societal structures.

Furthermore, Freire's (2014) concepts of conscientization or critical political awareness building as well as action and reflection provide valid contributions so as to understand the motivations and impacts of community communication for community journalists and their environment. The empirical analysis revealed that Freire's conscientization concept is utilized in the formation of community communicators and perceived as key for their work. Without a critical analysis of the mainstream media, counter-narratives cannot be formulated in a way that it disputes the underlying social inequalities.

Drawing the connection to Freire's concept of "action and reflection" (2014), it becomes clear that by engaging in the creation of own representations and community narratives, the community journalists reflect on their reality and bring their life situation and experiences in relation to daily happenings in the socio-political and economic arena that is impacting them. Through their community reporting, community journalists consciously decide to take action and to change their current life situation. The personal conversations during my field research revealed that many favela residents who are engaged in community media initiatives are also politically active in other social movement groups or community councils.

Indeed, both the concept of community communication (see Paiva, 2003) as well as Freire's (2014) postulations of emancipatory education are based on the daily experiences of the community journalists. The pedagogical impact of the "reflection" of one's own reality with the practical production of community media content as the "action" itself, resembles Freire's approach of "action and reflection" by which reality is transformed.

As the interviews showed, not all community media journalists considered themselves explicitly to be "agents of change". However, if the personal motivations are analyzed more profoundly, it can be stated that, in general, one of the driving factor always was the wish to have a positive impact on the community. Most notably, each of the interviewees was assuming, at least to some extent, responsibility to change social reality.

In addition, Higgin's definition of empowerment drawn from Freire (Higgins, 1999, p. 637) which includes the challenging of power relationships, suggests that the communication of counter-representations of favelas is challenging the relation between the "oppressors" and the "oppressed".

5.2 Community Media Initiatives' Strategies to Change Favela Representations

5.2.1 Objectives and Communication Strategies

During my fieldwork with the local community media initiatives, I became aware that there is a difference between community media that is administered by NGOs and that is led by citizens. The biggest differences exist with respect to their scope of work, their communication strategies, target audiences and financial structures. The community journalists which I interviewed are all working for community media initiatives that are led by local citizens.

With respect to the definitions of community communication and media presented in chapter 3.1.1, there is a major difference presented by the interviews concerning literature's criterion of the participatory aspect of community media. Only in the case of one initiative, the local community was really involved in the decision-making of which topics and articles should be included in the community journal:

É importante de enfatizar que é diferente de muitos outros agências: o jornal nasce dentro de um conselho comunitário. O conselho é feito sem ser institucionalizado, feito com moradores que decidem coisas sobre o território. Então, é tudo no jeito deles. (I-2)

For the other initiatives, the importance is put on the articles being written by residents or at least community journalists that are themselves living in a favela in order to have the "view from within".

Since the majority of the community media initiatives have no printed journal due to financial restrictions and utilize the communication channels of new media (further elaborated upon in 5.2.5), the participatory character of the production of community communication has to be discussed from another angle. Just as Freire's dialogical communication concept suggests, the "united reflections and action of the dialoguers" (2014, pp. 88–89) are made possible through the interactive possibilities of social media.

The online communication in social media allows local community members to directly interact and comment on posts and articles published online.

Objectives

- *Valuing of local knowledge and self-representation*

The self-representation of the own local history and the coverage of stories that otherwise would not be told by the mainstream press is one common objective that all interviewed community media initiatives shared. The following statement depicts that community media initiatives are criticizing mainstream media for their distanced and external view:

O jornal guarda história. É aí a importância do Jornal Comunitário é mostrar essa história com a perspectiva de quem mora, não na perspectiva de quem só olha - para a gente olhar crítico é partir de uma análise externa e distanciada. É o problema o que acontece. (I-2)

Community communication of these local initiatives thus departs from the wish to value the local knowledge and share it by those local community members who actually live these experiences.

- *Demystification of favelas as only violent places*

Hence, this, what I refer to as “counter-storytelling”, departs exactly from the opposite standpoint to mainstream media as it engages in a positive news coverage. It is dedicated to show the good things about favelas – as contests another community journalist: “Sempre foi com via social, com a ideia de coisas boas da Rocinha. Mostrar um outro lado que não é mostrado na grande mídia, no jornal Globo, Dia - todas essas jornais comerciais” (I-4).

This counter-storytelling is in line with the motivation of the community journalists to engage in community communication in order to combat the “*mistificação*” (I-2) or “*endemoniação*” (I-2) of favelas as merely being a violent place, as depicted above.

One community journalist also brought up the important aim of denouncing human rights violations by governmental police and military forces. Other than in Custódio’s study (2016), this seemed to be only a side issue addressed by the community media initiatives which I interviewed. This might be the reason why I did not encounter community journalists who defined themselves as “activists”.

- *Security function*

Nevertheless, the current intensification of police operations within favelas due to risen violence levels and perpetuated by the fact that the military state police was taking over the control of the police in Rio de Janeiro as of February 2018 (Phillips, 2018), a community journalist claims that:

O nosso intuito é mostrar coisa boa, só que agora com confrontos e tiroteios a gente precisa noticiar essas coisas também para as pessoas não saírem das casas no meio de tiroteio. (I-3)

In Nunes's study of 156 citizen-led local media's Facebook channels from Rio de Janeiro, he confirms that what he calls the "*páginas do bairro*" gradually changed their initial focus from producing more general content for their residents to covering incidents of everyday violence (2017, p. 7). Figure 5 depicts this tendency and breaks the posts about violence further down into posts that cover drug trafficking, everyday crimes such as robberies, and involvement of the police.

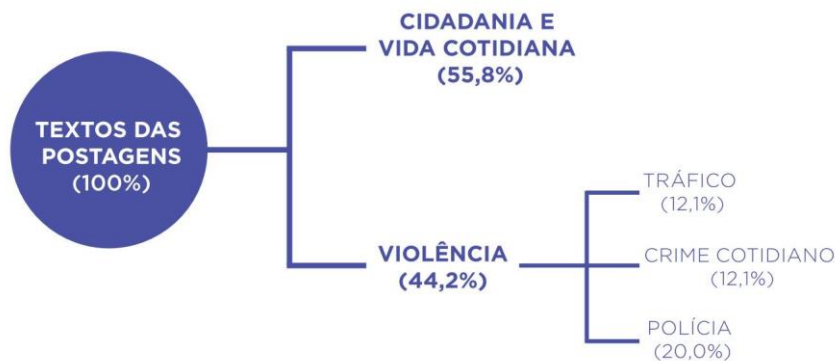


Figure 5: Content of the community media's Facebook posts (Nunes, 2017, p. 14)

It is important to notice here, that the "*páginas do bairro*" also comprise Facebook pages from non-favela spaces, such as *Alerta Copacabana* which certainly have contributed to his findings. Anyhow, his study is relevant to revise for this thesis as he also reveals important contextual knowledge about community media from favelas, including *Voz das Comunidades* and *Coletivo Papo Reto* who can be named as the most popular ones with regard to their outreach as they cover several favelas. Especially, Nunes's network analysis is helpful to discuss the findings of the interview, later in the next section.

Nunes mentions *Voz das Comunidades* as the most popular example for a hyper-local community Facebook page that started with covering the armed forces invasion of the

Complexo do Alemão- favela²⁶ in real time on Twitter in 2010 and that expanded to several favelas and has over 150.000 Facebook followers by now. This phenomenon of emerging online media that is serving as a security tool for the local communities has expanded in the last years. Nunes attributes this to the growth of new media in general and the diminishing importance of printed journals as well as the increased usage of smartphones (2017, p. 27).

O recrudescimento da violência pós-“pacificação” fez nascerem também páginas com o objetivo específico de informar aos seguidores pontos de ocorrência de confrontos e tiroteios. As mais conhecidas são “Onde Tem Tiroteio” (OTT) e “Fogo Cruzado”, sendo a primeira uma iniciativa de cidadãos e a segunda, da Anistia Internacional, que criou um aplicativo que recebe informações de seus usuários, ou por meio de sua conta do Twitter. (Nunes, 2017, p. 8)

- *Social projects*

Another objective for community media initiatives that was mentioned by two interviewees is its function which goes beyond being only a news source about favelas. In the words of a community journalist: “Não é só informar. A gente tem uma responsabilidade muito maior do que isso” (I-6). This more comprehensive responsibility of community media can take the form of social projects or even charity activities for the people in need within a community. One interviewee explained that “no Natal, eu fiz um postagem de coletar brincos e chocolates e a gente entregou essas coisas para as crianças mais carentes da Rocinha” (I-5).

Another example is the inclusion of cultural projects with the goal to reach a wider public:

A gente tinha um grupo de fotografia mesmo, que a gente chama ‘Fotografando a Favela da Rocinha’. A gente participou em algumas exposições. Lá na biblioteca da Rocinha tinha uma exposição de nosso grupo. Foi muito bacana o feedback das pessoas que mais uma vez não conheceu a Rocinha e você vê a través da visão do morador - isso é tão especial. (I-6)

These cultural projects can serve for reaching a public which would otherwise not have been reached with the community media’s usual communication channels, but that are important because “deu confiança de grupos de artistas que são bem influenciadores aqui nesse país” (I-6).

These aspects of community communication including a social dimension and a charity function go beyond the definitions of community media found in theoretical concepts.

²⁶ O Globo (2010).

However, in his definitions of alternative media, Downing contests that they should be understood as complex “agents of developmental power, not simply as counterinformation institutions” (Downing, 2001, p. 45). As the interviews show, this is also true for community media. These findings suggest that rigid definitions of community communication are not reflecting the diversity of the praxis of community media.

- *Focus of communicated content*

As the diverse objectives of different community media initiatives depicted above showed, their common characteristic is that their communicated content is always of importance to the local community, as Paiva’s (2003) conceptualization of community communication suggests. Apart from this, the wider objective of presenting alternative representations about favelas, demonstrates itself in the various focuses of the contents of the community media vehicles. Whether the focus lies on information about local events, social projects or charity initiatives or human rights denunciations as well as fighting for social justice depends on the personal experiences of the founders and on the geographical location of the initiative.

In addition, the local embeddedness of the community media initiative, i.e. whether its communication is dedicated to one specific favela or whether it comprises several ones, determines the extent to which favela-specific topics are addressed and the issues that affect favelas in general. The field research demonstrated the tendency that the more locally embedded the community media initiative is, the more locally focused are the contents of its communication. The community media initiatives that are overarchingly covering several favelas do more likely publish official data-informed reports.

Communication strategies

- *Target audience*

The communication strategy also guides the focus of the community communication and its contents, depending on the target audience. Some community initiatives aim to inform residents about what is happening in their favela, as mainstream media does not cover these topics. Others also aim to communicate to non-residents in order to change public opinion and discourses about favelas. The empirical data gathered through the interviews and observations shows that the inward or outward orientation of community communication guides the focus of the content of their vehicles.

- *Favela residents' perspective*

Notwithstanding that the target audience are primarily local community members or non-favela residents, the initiatives' community communication always departs from the perspective of the community members of the favela:

Nunca deixamos do lado a visão do morador. Ao final das contas, todos somos moradores. Então, a gente coloca uma visão que a gente sinta-se de dentro, a informação de dentro da Rocinha para fora. Isso é a nossa intenção - informar os moradores da Rocinha, mas também informar os moradores que não são da Rocinha. (I-6)

Transcending the viewpoint of the local people is the determining factor of this kind of communication, as the theory on community communication suggests (see Paiva, 2003; Peruzzo, 2004). This local perspective from the community journalists in the favelas permits a more proximate relation to the local news and stories:

Eu vejo que a gente já tem esse contato com as pessoas dentro da Rocinha e já conhece essas pessoas. A gente tem de certa forma uma intimidade de poder perguntar certas coisas e pode falar sobre isso com mais propriedade. Conhece a história viva; conhece a história acontecendo da pessoa que está ali fazendo alguma atividade dentro da Rocinha. (I-4)

A community journalist added an important comment on the different approach of community communication for reporting on violence:

A gente, quando vai falar sobre violência, tem um pensamento de informar as pessoas das coisas que estão acontecendo para elas poderem saber que está acontecendo um tiroteio na Rocinha hoje e não vá para tal lugar para ela não ser surpreendido, tendo uma bala perdida e coisas assim. (I-4)

This informative communication strategy to cover violence in favelas by community media initiatives differs significantly from the way this information is communicated by the mainstream media. As it has been analyzed in chapter 4.2, mainstream media's approach in reporting about violence in favelas incorporates sensational and commercial ends.

- *Community media channels*

The most common channel for community media initiatives to distribute their articles is Facebook as this communication channel allows for reaching the biggest audience. Additionally, almost all initiatives have their online site or blog on which they mainly publish longer reports and comprehensive articles. As one interviewee explains:

No site, só coloca tudo o conteúdo que a gente produz, escrito por nós mesmos. No Facebook, a gente replica esses conteúdos e outras coisas que a gente acha relevante, por

exemplo oportunidades de emprego, de cursos gratuitos, campanhas de saúde. Isso é publicado diariamente além do que acontece no território.

Mas o site não tem o alcance do Facebook. Não é um espaço de interação constante. No Facebook, tem interação diariamente, morador ou não-morador coloca num postagem - se achou legal ou se achou ruim. Ali, ele fala se concorda ou não concorda. O morador é território, o morador fala se é uma verdade ou não. (I-2)

One community journalist comments further on the different advantages of the other most frequently used social media channels – Instagram, Twitter and Youtube:

Por exemplo, as fotos legais que a gente tira do cotidiano da Rocinha – a gente coloca no Instagram. [...] E também me importa muito o Instagram das pessoas de fora que vem para acá conhecer e usam Instagram, tiram uma foto e colocam no Instagram delas. E eu peço e coloco aquele "Hashtag Favela da Rocinha". Porque as vezes é bom também ter a visão da pessoa de fora porque as vezes ela faz um registro bacana também na maneira que a gente acha interessante as pessoas ver. Então, a gente pega essa foto e faz um repost da foto dela. Então, essa questão do visual, fotográfico no Instagram, ele é muito importante.

Já fizemos transmissões em vivo de grandes eventos.

No Twitter, a gente alcança aquelas pessoas, não alcançáveis - os formadores de opinião. Eu acho isso extremamente importante. Se os formadores de opinião re-twittam, não importa se eles concordam ou se eles discordam. Eles re-twittam porque eles também querem esse mesmo feedback. Eles querem saber qual a opinião das pessoas. Isso é ótimo para a gente. A gente também fica sabendo.

Eu entendo a importância do Youtube como ela expor imagens porque tem pessoas que realmente não param para ler.

O problema do audiovisual é que demanda muito trabalho. Você tem que ir lá. Gravar, produzir e depois voltar para casa e editar. Não é fácil, a gente não faz isso com muita frequência por conta do trabalho. (I-6)

Concerning the advantages of social media, the dialogical opportunities of social media, as understood by Freire (2014), were highlighted by every interviewee due to the possibility of immediate feedback and discussion of the post's content by residents and non-residents who follow the page.

Some initiatives also include creative formats that are possible with new media, such as live-broadcasting via the Facebook-livestream or tools such as live-videos on Instagram. They are utilizing the traditional formats of TV in new media which allows them to reach a broader audience and engage creatively with their audiences.

Moreover, one community journalist emphasized the advantage of new media for reaching out to an international audience. For instance, he mentioned that Facebook has a function that allows for translating the post's content into diverse languages.

Often these community initiatives not only use social networks or printed journals as their channels, but also Whatsapp-Groups or other Smartphone-Apps in order to communicate with their audiences and collect hyper-local information:

Vale ressaltar que as páginas “hiperlocais” analisadas alimentam-se não só da reprodução de matérias dos jornais convencionais, nem apenas da autoprodução direta de notícias pelos seus seguidores, mas também de trocas ainda mais capilarizadas, que circulam subterraneamente por meio de aplicativos de mensagens instantâneas como o *WhatsApp*. (Nunes, 2017, p. 27)

This can be viewed as an even broader sphere of influence for the community media initiatives as they enter into dialogical communication (Freire, 2014) with community members.

Despite the advantages of social media highlighted by the interviewees, Nunes (2017) warns of the possible negative effects of such channels. His analysis revealed that Facebook can also constitute a threat to reinforce stereotypes and stigma:

Outro efeito potencialmente danoso desse tipo de postagem é o da reprodução de estereótipos e preconceitos. Quando se analisa, por exemplo, o perfil dos que aparecem em fotos de “suspeitos” ou alegados criminosos, com frequência visualizamos homens jovens e negros. (Nunes, 2017, p. 19)

However, these findings of Nunes have to be interpreted by taking into account that he included the content of Facebook pages from non-favela territories. As this thesis only focuses on the favela community Facebook pages and how they contribute to challenging stereotypical representations, this does not hold true. Yet, it is a factor to bear in mind as these other Facebook pages act as counter-powers. Looking at how bullying and cyber-mobs on opinion operates in the online sphere goes beyond the scope of this work, but it is certainly an issue to bear in mind.

Restricted Internet Access as a Structural Barrier

However, restriction in access to Internet for mainly the poorer population in favelas is a structural barrier for community media's reach out in Brazil. A study conducted in 2015 by the *Centro Regional de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento da Sociedade da Informação*, reveals that 70 million Brazilians do not have access to the Internet (Escola de Jornalismo Énois & data_labe, 2017). The study divided the population into classes ranging from A to E with E being the lowest income class. Among the two poorest classes D and E, 85% are without any internet connection at home. According to the results of the study, half of the persons from the survey have no installed internet access at home with a good velocity

because it is too expensive. It costs 100 *reais* per month which amounts to 10% of the minimum wage. The second reason for the lack of internet access is the missing infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro's peripheral region and inclusively in the favelas in the city center. The same study concluded that 65% of the poorest class are utilizing their mobile phones to access the Internet. Yet, accessing the Internet only through a mobile device is not providing the same possibilities as a local connection through computers would, the study reminded. For instance, watching videos with a slow mobile connection or learning how to program on a mobile phone screen is very difficult (Escola de Jornalismo Énois & data_labe, 2017).

Nonetheless, Brazil is at the forefront of social media usage. According to Facebook data, in June 2017, 52.5% of the Brazilian population had a Facebook account (Internet World Stats, 2017).

5.2.2 Impact on the Community

The impact of community media initiatives on local communities is described metaphorically by one interviewee: “A comunidade vê que ela tem voz! A nossa mídia comunitária, ela é o auto-falante” (I-3). This statement describes the empowering effect that the favela residents experience by having a platform to speak about their issues. The own representation in a way that allows for more adequate narratives than in the mainstream media, community communicators can talk about issues that otherwise would remain untouched by traditional reporting about favelas:

[A gente] está falando sobre a história daqueles pessoas o que de outra maneira não seria registrada. A grande mídia não tem interesse em registrar a nossa história, na rotina com precaridade diariamente. Nossa história não teria importância, interesse, impacto para ninguém. [...]

A gente nunca teve direito de questionar uma intervenção pública porque a gente não poder dizer as quais são as suas necessidades. Então quando isso é estimulada no morador e quem quer escrever, da ferramenta para contextos, inqueitações pessoais que virem coletivas. (I-2)

The second part of this interviewee's comment addresses the representative importance that community journalists acquire through addressing the issues that are relevant for the whole community.

In addition, the empowerment of the community members manifests itself through the educative effect that the community media initiatives have through their community communication, the formation courses or social projects (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 20). As

described in the section about the objectives of community media, learning about one's own rights as citizen and exerting this "*cidadania*" is a central concern of community communication. These findings are congruent with the characteristics of citizenship in the concept of "favela media activism" of Custódio (2016).

Moreover, the charity activities and social support projects that some community media initiatives have are welcomed by the community, as one interviewee recalls: "Falam que Rocinha precisa disso e disso... Eles agradecem pelo meu olhar humanitário. Eles agradecem por brigar por eles, por dando voz por eles" (I-5).

Another impact that the community communication has for the favela residents is the level of trust that they generate, especially the function of being a security tool: "As pessoas falam que não saem da casa sem ver no nosso Facebook se está tudo bem. Isso é muito legal. É uma confiança, certo?" (I-3)

5.2.3 Understanding of the Democratization of Community Media

When the community journalists were asked what their understanding of democratization of media is, their answers were quite diverse and ranged from a rather ideologic to a rather structural understanding. Some attribute a plurality of voices and the right to communicate to a democratization of communication. Others understand the democratization of media as linked to challenging the power and the spaces occupied by mainstream media in the media-scape.

Moreover, there are also perceptions of the democratization of media that go beyond the conceptualizations in academic literature. For instance, an interviewee connects the democratization of media to the ability of critical analysis, as he explains below:

Para mim, significa a possibilidade das pessoas saberem, entenderem o que esta sendo falado como mídia e a partir disso terem a oportunidade de falar também. Porque agora temos vários espaços de democratização: tudo mundo pode entrar no Youtube, tudo mundo pode editar um blog, mas as pessoas não sabem fazer análise do que eles estão lendo. Eles não sabem fazer uma crítica, e não pode se democratizar a fala. Você tem que capacitar às pessoas a interpretar aquela fala. A democratização da mídia para mim, é fazer a prática da análise crítica do que é falado, do que é visto no jornal, no livro, na escola, na praça. (I-2)

Another interviewee even describes the democratization of communication as a process of acquiring the "power of speech" which in her perception involves a certain responsibility for community communicators:

A gente acabou de ter um respeito maior e a gente acabou tendo nossa voz levada a sério. Isso ajuda a propagar, a democratizar mesmo a comunicação. Porque quando acreditam o que a gente está falando, a gente tem uma responsabilidade muito grande nas costas. A gente também tem esse poder de fala. (I-7)

Furthermore, another community journalist comprehends the democratization of the media-scape as involving a re-distribution of the government budget for advertising - with one part that should be reserved for community media:

um certo monopólio dessa mídia grande que coloca para as pessoas uma verdade única e só elas que tem esse espaço gigante de falar para uma quantidade enorme das pessoas e os veículos mais alternativos não tem essa oportunidade porque não recebe investimento do governo. [...] Todas essas campanhas sociais de governo, quando entra lá no jornal de grande mídia, é uma grana que financia esses meios de comunicação. Eu acho que se tivesse uma democratização dessa verba publicitária [...] uma distribuição para outros meios de comunicação que não são esses meios como *Folha de São Paul*, *O Globo*, *O Dia* [...] poderia se ter uma financiamento, ajuda para que outros meios de comunicação que falam mais localmente de outras formas e de outras verdades e de outras pessoas. (I-4)

In chapter 4.1, the struggle for a percentage of public funding for community media by an advocacy network of public university, NGO and community media representatives has been outlined. ANF also supports these debates as its founder, André Fernandes, is convinced that “a comunicação comunitária não pode deixar de ter acesso às verbas publicitárias. É preciso sair do campo ideológico para os números” (as cited in Roxo, 2017).

Nevertheless, the field research showed that the efforts for a democratization of the media-scape on a structural level are rather pushed by NGOs or other institutionalized actors, such as ANF, FNDC or big alternative media outlets like *Mídia Ninja*.

In a debate on *Rio TV Debate*, André Fernandes and representatives from UFRJ and the municipal council debated about community communication and the importance of government funds designated to alternative and community media vehicles.²⁷ Similar to the debate described above, the common consensus was as well that this financial support could be the solution to the main challenge of alternative outlets. One participant in the debate, Ivana Bentes, a professor at UFRJ’s ECO, articulated the vision of “a nova grande mídia” which she describes as a unity of the 50,000 printed journals of ANF, two million

²⁷ See the full debate by Rio TV Debate (2018).

followers on Facebook of *Mídia Ninja* and the networks of *Coletivo Papo Reto* and *Voz das Comunidades* (Rio TV Debate, 2018).

These visions of NGO and academia representatives who propose to either attribute a share of the government budget to community media vehicles or to form big networks of alternative media illustrate what Rodríguez (2001) explained as the possibility for alternative media's producers to shift power relations through gaining market access. However, I identify the difficulty for small grassroot community media vehicles for being included into this struggle for a market share. As they lack the institutional connections and possibilities of access to policy-makers (see Stammers & Eschle, 2005), they might not benefit from the redistribution of government funds unless NGOs are willing to include them as well as beneficiaries.

To sum this sub-chapter up, the diverse understanding of the interviewees of media democratization suggest that the conceptualizations of literature (see in 3.3) are too narrowly defined for the praxis. With respect to the findings of the interviews in combination with literature's statements, media democratization should be understood as twofold. On the one hand, it comprises the democratization of the structure of the media-landscape, i.e. the inherent proposition of media activism to challenge existing power relations and market control by powerful actors. On the other hand, it is targeted at the democratization of the process of communication itself, i.e. access to and participation in own knowledge production, self-representation, and appropriation of media and technologies – for which community communication, as defined in this thesis – can serve as a solution.

5.2.4 Strategies to Counter Mainstream Media's Representations of Favelas

As previously discussed in chapter 3.3, Sartoretto divides media practices of activist organizations into the construction of their own arenas and the development of relations with mainstream media (2016, p. 275). Similarly, the strategies of community media initiatives can be categorized into (a) strategies to communicate counter-representations outside mainstream media and (b) strategies to actively insert their counter-representations into mainstream media. The analysis of the empirical findings suggests that these strategies for counter-favela representations are fulfilling different functions according to their target audience, as does the initiatives' general communication

strategy. The first category of strategies is primarily aimed at the conscientization of favela residents. The second category is directed at changing the public opinion from non-favela residents.

a) Strategies to communicate counter-representations outside mainstream media

As identified through the field research, the strategies that community media initiatives utilize for communicating their counter-representations in spheres parallel to mainstream media can be further divided into collective denunciations and postings on social media and counter-fact storytelling.

- *Collective denunciations and postings*

As for the collective denunciations and postings, the accompanying observations of the community media initiatives' posts on their Facebook, Twitter or Instagram sites revealed that they organize themselves with the help of online campaigns that try to bundle the opinions on different issues concerned with the fight for social justice or favela representations in specific. For instance, community journalists utilize hashtags for collective postings, such as this campaign call by a community journalist “#favelapotênciafavelaviva” illustrates in figure 6:



Figure 6: Collective Facebook campaign - #favelapotênciafavelaviva (own screenshot from Facebook)

In brief, they conjointly target their denunciations to stereotypical favela representations.

- *Counter-fact storytelling*

Another strategy to counter mainstream media narratives of favelas with own representations by community journalists, is through formulating and disseminating counter-narratives or counter-fact stories about favelas. As I described for the motivations of community journalists above in 5.1.1, community journalists have the aim to change the public perceptions of the favela-space. They do this through emphasizing other

aspects than violence and focus on positive aspects by highlighting e.g. entrepreneurial or sustainability projects, cultural events and heritages or other information about the favela locality. An interviewee provides the following example for this strategy of presenting counter-narratives:

Num momento que a grande mídia, colocava as pautas ruins: “Na Rocinha tive tiroteio, três mortos...” – ao mesmo tempo eu colocava no meu blog: “Senhora de 70 anos cria uma cresce, há mais de 30 anos na Rocinha, que ganhou premio internacional da ONU”.
(I-6)

Another interviewee mentioned that their representational strategy focuses on utilizing official data for informed reports about favelas which present the facts in another light than mainstream media do (I-7). I chose to call this strategy “counter-fact storytelling” which can also comprise the explicit denunciation of falsely presented news about favelas by mainstream media (see a case example later on *Piscinas do Tráfico na Maré*).

Applying Castells ideas on symbolic construction (2005, pp. 6-7) (see also chapter 3.3) to these findings, it can be concluded that counter-fact storytelling is an effective strategy to dispute common narratives. This is valid because “the transformation of the communication environment directly affects the forms of meaning construction” (Castells, 2005, p. 6). When communication networks are further understood as the public space in the network society, according to Castells, then processes of social change can be generated by a “reprogramming of the communication networks” (2013, p. 300). In turn, this means for the community media initiatives that their orientation of the favela narrative towards more positive associations in online media can be regarded as a process towards this reprogramming and as eventually leading to social changes.

However, other scholars view this more critically as they say that the effects of this online communication have to be transported to the real world as well (see Couldry, 2012). Yet, the field research showed that these counter-narratives are also discussed in the offline-world through events and public debates.

This extract from an interview illustrates that community journalists acknowledge the importance of collective support for effectively disputing hegemonic discourses:

Então si tem uma articulação de mídia quando o problema for na Rocinha, o Manguinhos vai falar, o Alemão vai falar, a gente vai falar juntos, vai se apurar juntos. O resultado seria muito maior se moradores de vários lugares teriam percepção que aquele relação não é só da Rocinha. Ela está especificamente na Rocinha hoje, mas ela vai se repetir amanhã - só que não tem isso. (I-2)

One community journalist even views community communicators as responsible for exerting their collective power and claims that the matureness of community media allows to confront mainstream media:

[A mídia comunitária] nunca consegue subindo o patamar onde consegue atingir um nível de aceitação. Porque nós somos tratados como moradores, o que fazemos. Mas não somos tratados como profissionais. Só que ao longo dos anos, como você ver em que os projetos amadurecem, quando os projetos começam a crescer de tal forma de que não há controle, e pega esse público de opinião pública. Esse público começa a questionar, aí a gente mexe com as pessoas grandes.

Então, as mídias estão amadurecendo, estão crescendo, estão entendendo o que ela é de fato para sociedade - qual é o papel delas. Não é só informar. Eu ia descobrir isso ao longo do meu projeto também. Não é só informar. A gente tem uma responsabilidade muito maior do que isso. (I-6)

These observations considered, mainstream media sees itself more and more under pressure to cover issues about favelas from a different angle than they used to. This is attributed to the fact that especially the amount of online community media vehicles has increased within the last years and public opinion transported in online networks gains importance.

This opportunity is realized by the community journalists as this interview excerpt depicts:

A mídia comercial não tem toda força que ela tinha antes, eu acho, com o Internet e tudo mais. Mas a gente encontra uma maneira de disputar esse público, de disputar a verdade, disputar os fatos. (I-7)

Drawing on the conscientization concept of Freire, these strategies for communicating counter-representations of favelas to the community are enabling the favela residents to better understand their reality. As chapter 4.2 showed, the portrayal of favelas in mainstream media is putting the focus on violence and superficial coverage of their complexities of daily life while obscuring underlying conditions such as the roots of social inequalities, namely the history of slavery and its effects until today. Additionally, Freire's dialogical communication concept describes the possibilities of favela residents to enter into reflective processes with their "educators" – the community journalists behind the community media vehicles.

b) Strategies to actively insert counter-representations into mainstream media

Just as Freire had "one foot within and one foot outside of the system", as he was working with social movements and in the ministry of education (Mayo, 2006, pp. 75–76),

community media initiatives also pursue strategies to actively insert their own narratives into the sphere of mainstream media. These strategies can be subsumed under: providing hyper-local, real-time favela news on social media, utilizing the contact to mainstream media journalists, communicating to public-opinion-influencers, establishing strategic partnerships with the international press and engaging in activist events.

- *Hyper-local, real-time news coverage*

One strategy for inserting counter-representations of favelas into mainstream media is the hyper-local, real-time news coverage of favelas on social media channels by community journalists. The following interview excerpt demonstrates how this strategy was used during the pacification process when the UPP entered the favela of *Rocinha* in 2012:

Todos nós do equipe estávamos nas nossas casas e nós noticiamos no tempo real pelo Twitter, pelo Facebook. No tempo real, o que estava acontecendo. Nós fomos acompanhando tudo o processo de pacificação em tempo real. E ali, na entrada da Via Ápia, estava imprensa internacional. Estava *Al Jazeera*, *CNN*, *BBC*, *Globo* - acho que 50 mídias - esperando o que que iria acontecer. E a gente, dentro das nossas casas, noticiando: um corpo subindo, está tendo tiroteio, os policiais estão invadindo as casas. O Twitter, antes da pacificação, ele tinha 150 seguidores e isso subiu para 8 mil em uma hora. E tinha, Caitano Veloso, um cantor famoso, ele re-twitou. Eram pessoas e grandes influentes da cultura, da política. Começaram re-tuitar e a gente começou a subir. Eu vi que a gente estava fazendo algo muito sério, de bastante responsabilidade. (I-6)

As this example illustrates, community journalists as residents of the favela where police operations or military interventions take place are exposed to these situations whereas an outside reporter would barely enter into an area of armed conflict and thus has not the same access to information. Furthermore, due to the personal relations to the favela and its residents, community journalists can use this local embeddedness as an advantage against outside reporters of the mainstream media which cannot acquire the same profound understanding of the locality and might not achieve the same level of intimacy with informants. Therefore, mainstream media rely in these cases on the hyper-local, real-time information provided by community media outlets.

- *Relation to mainstream media*

Another strategy for implementing the issues relevant for the community, is to utilize the contacts with mainstream media journalists that mostly have been established through professional contacts by the community media journalists.

E recentemente nos formos alguma parceria com o TV Globo. Nos temos um espaço na TV Globo onde colocaremos as nossas pautas. Eu estou muito otimista. A gente vai alcançar um público que a gente não alcança e eu espero que dê certo.

Então, eles vão até as autoridades é falam: olha, nos tivemos esse e esse problema e aí você vai solucionar isso como? E esse é a minha maior ansiedade de ver logo isso acontecer. (I-6)

In contrast to his optimistic view of a collaboration with mainstream media, Paiva (2017) has commented in my interview that this partnership has already been undertaken by TV Globo in the past and was unsustainable. She also considered it to be rather a form of “good publicity” and “assistentialism” instead of a means to really challenge the narratives of favelas in mainstream media.

Nunes claims that there is a complex relationship between community media and mainstream media:

A relação entre essas novas modalidades de produção de informações e a mídia tradicional é bastante complexa. Por um lado, alguns grandes jornais passaram a basear parte de seu noticiário em conteúdos provenientes dessas páginas; por outro, elas constituem espaços de compartilhamento e difusão de notícias publicadas por veículos de mídia tradicionais. (2017, p. 27)

This complex relation of mainstream media and community media is also contradictory with respect to community communication’s inherent criticism of the modalities of mass media. However, by utilizing “mass online media” such as Facebook, community media initiatives can reach a wider public and construct their counter-publics more effectively, as it has been demonstrated before. In the same way, it is somehow contradictory of community media to criticize mainstream media’s content but at the same time regard it as a strategy to utilize mainstream media to infiltrate their counter-narratives.

In the interviews with community journalists, this complex interrelation became even more clear as some of the interviewees are working for big media enterprises. They have two functions: acting as a community journalist and acting as a professional in mainstream media. However, this is always regarded to be an advantage by the community journalists as they make use of their professional contacts for creating new projects and possibilities for their work.

- *Strategic partnership building*

Nevertheless, strategic partnerships are another strategy that some community media initiatives use in order to reach rather structural or long-term goals. The statements of the

interviewed community journalists were divided into those initiatives that like to foster relationships with NGOs as they consider it as a support for their work and into other initiatives that rather refrain from collaborating with NGOs as they fear a concession of their autonomy.

Research on the internationalization of social movements by Stammers and Eschle highlights the different strengths of grassroots organizations and NGOs (2005, pp. 60–61). The authors recognize that grassroots initiatives tend to be better locally embedded in everyday life and that NGOs generally have international connections and links to other institutions. Indeed, the case of ROW illustrates how community media initiatives collaborate with ROW in order to see their articles translated into English and made accessible for an international audience.

- *Reaching public-opinion influencers*

At this point, I want to mention the approach of ROW to support community media initiatives in inserting their articles into the international press. They were especially taking advantage of the increased number of articles produced by international reporters during the mega events. ROW's strategy was to engage in strategic storytelling:

Then what we do is that we are strategic about selecting things that are not being talked about and launch it on RioOnWatch. Or maybe we think it needs to be pushed harder and then we strategically chose to emphasize what has already been talked about. I feel like the space of community reporting and organization supporting that is very strategic and embedded networked. (Williamson, 2018)

And to reach a strategic audience and opinion-influencers:

Our audience, is not the average person or the ordinary residents of favelas, it's leaders, organizers, urban planners, researchers, journalists – so it's people who influence public opinion. (Williamson, 2018)

Through collaborating with NGOs such as in the ROW-project, grassroots community communication initiatives have the opportunity to reach a bigger audience, also across national borders. In the case of ROW, the community initiatives receive a small monetary compensation for their published articles which in one case was enabling the initiative to pay for the internet access and transportation costs for a community journalist.

ROW's strategy proved to be successful as national media has seen itself pressured to also cover issues that international press reported on. ROW tracked the success of nuanced articles about Rio during the mega-events in its reports (Catalytic Communities,

2016, 2017) and still continues to monitor the coverage about favelas in the international press and provides a knowledge platform for international reporters when covering issues about Rio de Janeiro.

It is important to recognize that these different strategies of countering mainstream media representations of favelas are often interlinked and utilized at the same time. Hence, the insertion of topics communicated by community media initiatives into mainstream media may be intentional or unintentional. This is due to the fact that the relation of community media and mainstream media is complex as mainstream media is sometimes basing its news coverage on the content of community media outlets (Nunes, 2017, p. 27).

Certainly, this may provide opportunities for community media initiatives in reaching a wider public. At the same time, this might also present challenges because the community initiatives cannot control how mainstream media treats their disseminated information.

Case Example: *Piscinas do Tráfico na Maré*

At this point, I want to mention a case example that was taking place during my field research and that serves to illustrate various strategies of community media initiatives and how they are interlocked, namely collective denunciations, counter-fact storytelling and media events:

Recentemente, o jornal carioca *Meia Hora* publicou uma matéria de capa²⁸ no qual o tráfico teria colocado área de lazer para crianças no meio da rua na Nova Holanda, no Complexo da Maré. A foto usada na capa do jornal era de moradores se divertindo em piscinas. (Silva, 2018a)

Michel Silva is a well-known community journalist from the favela of *Rocinha* and has investigated the case and written an article about it on his community media site *Favela em Pauta*, in which he denounces the affirmation made by the journal *Meia Hora* that the swimming pools were installed by local drug traffickers.

Para um leitor comum, a matéria revela uma verdade. Mas para mim, morador da favela, o fato apresentado não condiz com a realidade. Tanto é que resolvi apurar a capa do *Meia Hora* e descobri que não tinha nenhuma investigação policial em curso e os agentes da Polícia Civil só tomaram conhecimento da denúncia pela imprensa. Ora bolas. Um fake news escancarado na capa de um dos maiores jornais direcionados a classe C e D. (Silva, 2018a)

²⁸ See the full article published by O Dia (2018).



Figure 7: Sunday edition of Meia Hora, published on 21st of January, 2018 (Silva, 2018b)

He found out that the picture used for the title page (see in figure 7) was utilized some years ago by a community media online initiative from *Maré*. When confronting the journal's chief editor with these false statements, the editor denied any journalistic default and refrained from naming the residents that are said to have claimed the drug-financed swimming-pools due to privacy and security issues (Silva, 2018b).

Favela em Pauta posted the denunciation on Facebook which was immediately re-posted, commented and denounced by other community media communicators on their Facebook pages, as illustrated in figure 8.



Figure 8: Re-postings by other community media initiatives (own screenshots from Facebook)

One of the interviewees referred to this case as an example of how “counter-fact” storytelling can look like and to exemplify the communicational strategy of her initiative:

Foi muito interessante, as pessoas poderem saber o outro lado da história. A gente descobriu que na verdade, essas piscinas não estavam sendo investigadas - que foi o que o jornal da Meia Hora fez, inclusive não foi assinada por ninguém do jornal. Então, a gente encontra uma maneira de disputar esse público, de disputar a verdade, disputar os fatos. (I – 7)

The post by *Favela em Pauta* on Facebook (in figure 9) was also reacted to by other favela residents and Facebook users who commented on the profit interest of the journal and the problem of their journalists being non-favela residents from richer neighborhoods and who refrain from talking to local people to get their information.



Figure 9: Reactions to post by residents and Facebook users (own screenshots from Facebook)

Amongst the reactions, there was also a creative response to how the journal's cover should rightfully have looked like and a proposal of how an alternative news coverage from a resident's perspective should have been presented – talking about the missing free-time activities and the unbearable heat in the North Zone in figure 10.



Figure 10: Propositions on how to “counter-cover” swimming-pools in Maré (own screenshots from Facebook)

The amount of reactions induced the community media initiatives *Maré Vive* and *Coletivo Papo Reto* to organize a demonstration in front of the journal's site in Rio's city center two weeks later (see figure 11), announcing it publicly on Facebook.



Figure 11: “Piscinação”-counter-event in front of *Meia Hora*’s office (own screenshot from Facebook)

This collective action can be regarded as a media event described by Jong et al. which they depict as a possible strategy for activist groups to bring their alternative point of view across within mainstream media:

To an extent they succeed, deploying media strategies becomes a form [of] self-empowerment for those involved as well as being part of their struggle for social change. (Jong, Shaw, & Stammers, 2005b, p. 7)

Although it is difficult to determine the exact transformative impact on social reality that the “*piscinação*”-event and the collective social media reactions had, its repercussion on social media by other community journalists and in other alternative media sources²⁹ showed the impact that a collective conscientization and sensitization can have on reflections of the contents of mainstream media.

One example thereof, is the post of a community journalist illustrated in figure 12 who reflected on the differentiation made by mainstream media when talking about free-time activities in the favelas and in the “*asfalto*”, by referring to an article about carnival people entitled “*Para se refrescar no fogo da folia*” in *O Globo* only two days after the event:

²⁹ See e.g. articles on ANF by Gouveia (2018) and on ROW by Ferraz (2018).



Figure 12: Difference of media coverage of swimming pools in the favela and in the “asfalto” (own screenshot from Facebook)

Michel Silva concludes on the need to unite different favela communicators to fight for the common goal in order to transform social reality for the better:

Devemos parar com a mania de falar um para o outro: ‘Vamos combinar de fazer algo juntos’ e isso fica apenas no campo do desejo. É preciso ação, proatividade, realização. O comunicador da Maré precisa cruzar o Rebouças e trocar ideias com o comunicador da Rocinha. O comunicador da Rocinha precisa pegar o metrô e dar um pulo na Mangureira. A missão é circular a cidade e co-criar. Ficar só em nosso território não surtirá o efeito social que desejamos. (Silva, 2018a)

In summary, this exemplary case revealed that these informal networks are becoming effective in such situations that require a collective reaction and mutual support. There was no need for having a formalized group of people in charge of denouncing falsified facts by mainstream media coverage of favelas.

Networks and Cooperation

The possibility to form a bigger network of local community media initiatives evolved as a central theme in the interviews. Likewise, during the field research, there were several debates hosted and national encounters of community communicators organized.³⁰ As my thesis focuses on the view of the community journalists, I will present what they told me

³⁰ Mostly by NGOs, e.g. ANF’s (2017) “1. Encontro Latinoamericano de Comunicação Comunitária” in July 2017.

in the interviews on their opinion of forming networks. It was discussed as a strategy to confront the mainstream media's representative power. However, it does not fall into the two categories used afore to characterize community vehicles' strategies and is therefore explained as a separate strategy. In the following discussion with the propositions from literature on (online) networks, I will address the potentials and challenges of this strategy through the perspectives of the community journalists.

Some of the interviewed community media initiatives mentioned the forming of a bigger network with other initiatives as one of their goals. They see it as a chance to acquire more collective power to speak about themselves and to present the topics important to favelas. The following quote exemplifies this:

Vamos lutar para os propósitos coletivos. Cada favela tem os seus propósitos individuais, como os seus propósitos coletivos. Porque o problema não é individual, não é só de Manguinhos – é das favelas. A precaridade na infraestrutura, a segurança pública não é só numa favela, é na maioria delas. Isso será uma riqueza infinita, ter vários comunicadores com o propósito de falar sobre a política pública na favela. Seria uma apurada muito maior. (I-2)

Additionally, they regard it as an opportunity to share their experiences and to gain mutual support in generating ideas for their online pages and keep up-to-date on what is happening in their favela.

From the interviews it became clear that there exists dialogue between the community members and the community journalists through a sort of invisible network:

Para as pessoas de fora, eles não podem ver isso. Mas tem uma rede aqui dentro. A gente sabe justamente a quem chegar se precisa ajuda de alguma forma. A gente está ligada - está conetada - de alguma forma de outra. (I-6)

Some members of the community are friends with the community journalists and provide help for certain projects. For one initiative, the dialogue existed rather within the comments to the posts on Facebook, in other cases the contact was maintained via a Whats-App group. In one case, residents were actively approaching one community journalist in order for her to publish an issue online that affected them personally.

Many community media initiatives stated that they also maintain strong bonds with other local social initiatives, projects and individuals that engage themselves in the community. The community initiatives post about the local initiative's work on social media or write articles about them on their website.

These assumptions made about an already existing informal network of community media can be supported by the quantitative study by Nunes (2017). He mapped the interconnections of 156 Facebook pages in Rio de Janeiro.

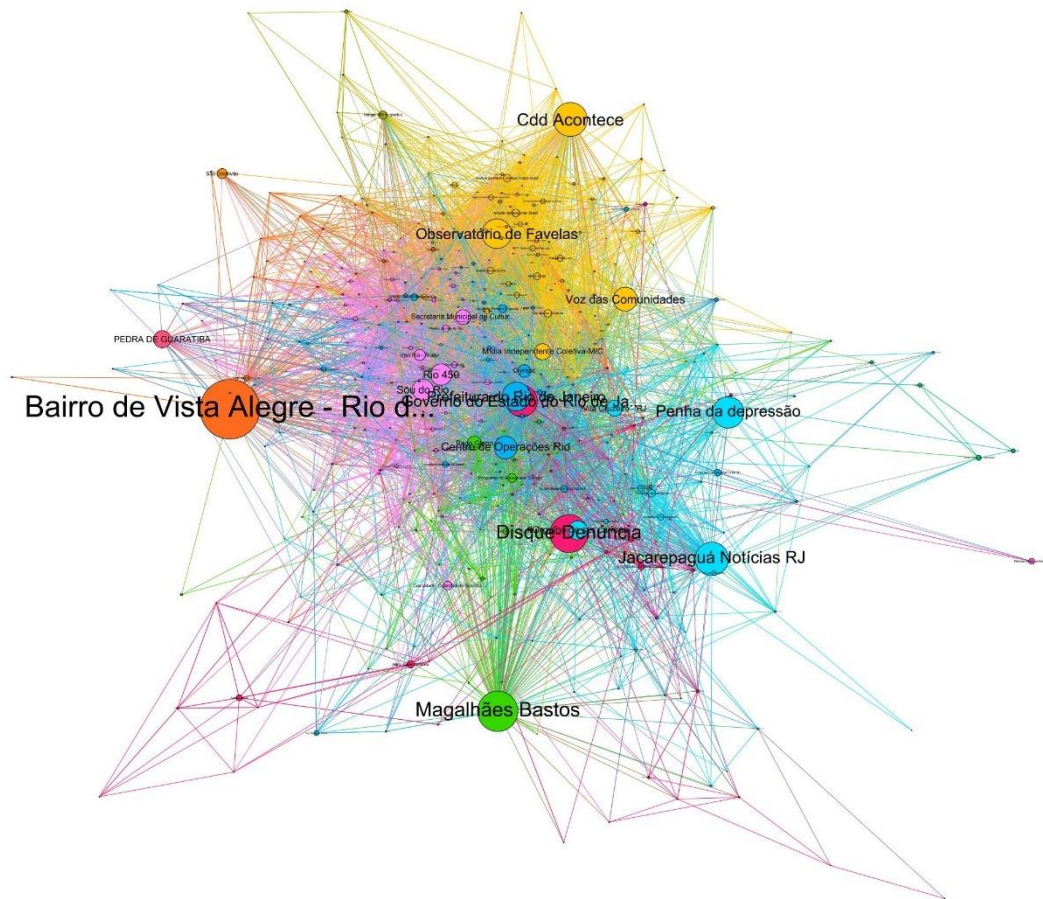


Figure 13: Network of community medias' Facebook pages in Rio de Janeiro (Nunes, 2017, p. 24)

Nunes's illustration of the connected community Facebook pages depicts in figure 13 that there already exists a networked online space between various community media initiatives. The mapped online network illustrates how many connections a community Facebook page has to other pages and to which ones. Through analyzing the "likes" for each other's content posts, the map is also able to show the intensity of the interconnections between different Facebook pages.

Figure 14 below analyses in more detail the online network between the community Facebook pages mostly with focus on the North Zone. The illustration shows that the strongest articulated page is "CDD Acontece", followed by the NGO "Observatório de Favelas" (although not analyzed in the study). This network further includes pages such as "Mídia Ninja", "Redes da Maré" and "Coletivo Papo Reto" which are all in some way

concerned with the defense of human rights and right to security and freedom of expression (Nunes, 2017, p. 26).

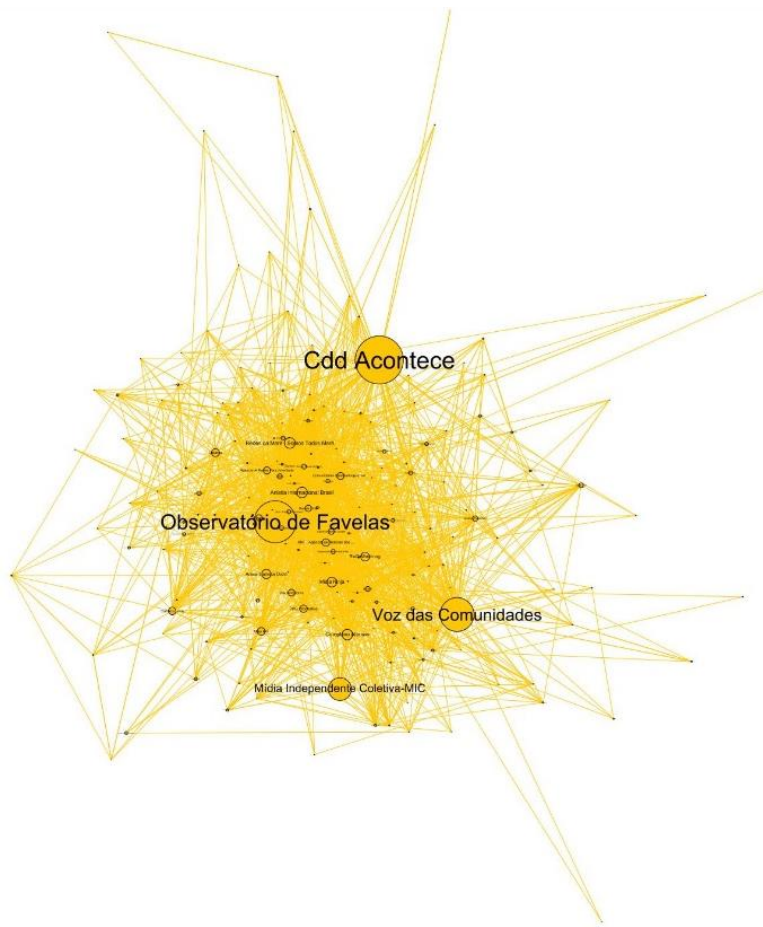


Figure 14: Zoom-in: network of community medias' Facebook pages in the North Zone (Nunes, 2017, p. 26)

Despite the fact that Nunes included Facebook pages of non-favela city districts into his analysis, the findings contest the results from the interviews. Although community media initiatives are hyper-local, they are not isolated or disconnected (Nunes, 2017, p. 25). Their networked social environment does not only manifest itself in the online space. As the interviews demonstrated, this is also valid in the real social world concerning the personal ties with community members, local social project organizers, NGOs as well as other community media initiatives in different favelas.

This observation is mirrored in Castells's analysis of social movements in a "network society" (2015). He conceptualizes social movements as being networked in multiple forms as "it includes social networks online and offline, as well as pre-existing social networks, and networks formed during the actions of the movement" (Castells, 2015, p. 249).

After all, many community communicators rather imagined a network building of community media initiatives taking place through natural social encounters, rather than formalized meetings. This is due to the fact that the interviewees identified the missing regularity and continuity of such attempts of unification as the main reasons why there has been no regular network emerged so far. Other challenges for forming a bigger network are the individual manners of community communication and the own agendas of every initiative:

Enfim, é um desafio interno mesmo das pessoas se unirem porque cada um tem os seus interesses. Cada um tem os seus projetos, seus objetivos, seus funções e a sua vida pessoal do lado. (I-7)

É muito complicado porque cada um tem a sua forma de fazer comunicação. Acho que as pessoas não querem abrir mão da sua forma, sabe. Querem ter a sua estrela - querem ser os protagonistas. Não querem tipo compartilhar esse protagonismo de certa forma. Cada um tem o seu meio de comunicação. (I-4)

This illustrates the conflict line between the initiatives' daily work and the structural struggle on a bigger scale. One interviewee laments the difficulty to form a small local network which is not linked to NGOs:

Na verdade, a gente tem o desafio de formar rede de pessoas o nosso próprio lugar. Acho que não só na Maré mais em outros lugares também. Tem muitos ONGs e instituições que fazem comunicação e que passam muitas vezes a ser a voz daquela favela. Então, como a gente pode reunir comunicadores sem passar por o grupo independente e a ONG passar pela fonte oficial? Isso também é um desafio da gente de poder se unir e não se separar. (I-7)

She had a very critical view of the role of NGOs which was reflected in her opinion that networks should not be formalized, but that collaborations between community journalists happen naturally:

A gente é comunicador e não necessariamente a gente precisa o tempo todo se intitular com projeto específico mas como comunicador mesmo pode se unir com a galera independente de apoio o não.

É um pouco natural, nesse meio de comunicadores. Sempre tem evento cultural onde a galera se reúne. Sempre tem encontros, não necessariamente reuniões. Mas enfim encontros, eventos e a gente vai se encontrar, se reunir, vai trocando ideia porque isso sempre soma quando a gente vai falar sobre comunicação nas favelas. Como a gente pode fazer de uma maneira que alcance tudo mundo e que fale sobre o que a favela precisa que seja falada naquele momento?

As vezes é mais fácil essa informalidade, mas as coisas de qualquer forma, elas acontecem. A gente faz acontecer independente da maneira, do formato, do planejamento e tal. (I-7)

In conclusion, the interviews showed that with regard to networking strategies, community media initiatives tend to valorize informal and already existing networks instead of formalized big networks as this is rather envisioned by NGOs such as ANF. Community media initiatives do not always regard the complicity with mainstream media as a possible strategy. This practical perspective differs from the positive view of interconnected NGOs presented in literature (see e.g. Stammers & Eschle, 2005).

5.2.5 Challenges for Community Media Initiatives

For a comprehensive analysis of the community media's strategies' effectiveness, it is important to examine the challenges that they are facing with regard to implementing their work.

Scarce Financial Resources

A common obstacle for all community media initiatives is the lack of financial resources. Their not-for-profit nature does require from the community journalists to work voluntarily. Though, this condition poses several challenges as the initiatives' collaborators have to divide their time for earning an income elsewhere and often pursue their studies at the same time. Consequently, community media initiatives have difficulties to retain their journalists working for them on a voluntary basis. In the words of an interviewee, this is due to the following reason: "Na hora de acabar a faculdade, o mercado de comunicação vai puxar ela e eu não vou poder como dizer 'Fica!', porque ela vai ter que pagar as contas dela" (I-2).

Thus, ensuring the continuity of the community media initiatives is a huge challenge. For the only community media initiative represented in the interviews that once had a printed journal, the discontinuation of financial resources resulted in the community journal's cessation. Currently, they are only publishing their articles on their website. Moreover, financial restrictions often lead to a lack of infrastructure, such as a missing physical space for meetings, shortage of computers or even of an installed internet access at home.

A point often overlooked by literature about community media that is strictly negating that community media could include commercial elements, is the possibility of earning money with advertisement which community journalists envision as a means to sustain their community communication activities. Two of the interviewed community

journalists already had this idea of generating an income by selling publicity spaces on their website or on their Facebook page:

A gente já tinha a ideia de fazer que o site tenha mais trânsito e tenha mais matérias surgindo lá no site. É uma ideia para a gente poder fazer para que o site fica um pouco mais comercial. A gente consegue vender coisas também com o site - fazendo parcerias com pessoas que vão anunciar no site para gerar renda, para a gente poder investir no site. Para poder investir para as pessoas que trabalham no site, porque a gente não tem como financiar as pessoas. (I-4)

Indeed, one community journalist has already realized paid advertising spots on her Facebook page but laments on the missing demand: “Eu fiquei em casa sem trabalho e pensei que eu queria transformar a página num trabalho. Aí comecei a trabalhar com anúncios. Só que não tenho muitos clientes” (I-5).

Although this difficulty might be valid for smaller initiatives in their closed community, selling advertisement spaces on a broader scale could generate the necessary resources for either paying the initiatives’ collaborators or for being able to make a living of one’s engagement in the initiative.

This vision of some community journalists to utilize their vehicles for generating resources is commented by André Fernandes from ANF who, as described before, regards community media’s role as not only being counter-hegemonic “não somente na ideologia más também nos números” (André Fernandes, 2018). He defends the viewpoint that the strict distinction of community media from mainstream media along the premise that community media should not pursue commercial ends, is flawed. In his opinion, if community media aims to acquire more power and to dispute mainstream media, the structural conditions have to be taken into account. His thinking is congruent with Sartoretto’s (2016) propositions of structural changes for the democratization of media.

For ANF, he is also selling advertisement space in its printed journal – mostly being government advertisement relevant for favelas. To enhance the debate of selling advertisement space for generating resources for community media, it is important to bear in mind that the possibilities of small-scale local community initiatives differ immensely from those of institutionalized NGOs that have other possibilities to access government representatives or institutional stakeholders (see Milan, 2013).

Individual Goals vs. Collective Struggles

Alongside the challenge for community media initiatives to form a counter-hegemonic force to mainstream media number-wise, there exists the conflict line of defending their own interests and of engaging in the broader struggle of disputing mainstream media's hegemony and monopoly of speech.

As the empirical field research revealed, there exists a multiplicity of resistances of over 150 grassroot community media initiatives that are independently fighting for more just representations of favelas. Simultaneously, there seems to emerge a more formalized institutionalization of resistances pioneered by NGOs and connected to governmental entities. This constitutes a more bundled power bloc as it is also connected with the struggle of alternative media to counter mainstream media. As it has become clear throughout the thesis, FDNC is working towards a more democratic media-scape and is supported by alternative media such as *Mídia Ninja*. The field research showed that there are also connections with academia, for instance between the UFRJ and ANF, which can e.g. enable the access to government representatives and induce dialogue with powerful influencers.

Regarding these different forms of resistances to counter mainstream media, community media initiatives see themselves confronted with this conflict line of where to invest their resources and put their focus on. The community journalists that I interviewed explained that on the one hand, they view the institutionalization of the struggle for a democratization of media and more just representations of favelas positively. On the other hand, the daily work of the community initiatives gains more relevance than the structural struggle.

In essence, chapter 5 presented the empirical findings from the interviews and observations made during the field research and discussed it with the theoretical framework developed in chapter 3. Academic literature helped to identify and describe the main characteristics of community communication for the community media initiatives analyzed. These are the participatory aspect and its orientation towards the interest of the community (Paiva, 2003; Rennie, 2006). Nevertheless, academia failed to embrace the whole variety of objectives and strategies that the initiatives pursue, especially with respect to the security function and social projects which the initiatives implement. Moreover, despite the existence of literature on social movements and

activism strategies on online media (Castells, 2013; Couldry, 2002, 2015; Lievrouw, 2011), it was difficult to find theories which explain exactly the construction of counter-representations for grassroot organizations such as community media initiatives.

The concluding chapter 6 will resume the most important findings of this master's thesis and highlight its implications for the community media initiatives themselves and for practitioners in the realm of community media. It will also present the limitations of this research study and give an outlook for further research on the topic.

6 Conclusion

“Quando a gente conseguir ainda mais unir o que a gente tem perto, a gente também vai poder reunir quem está longe.”

(Community Journalist, I-7, 2018)

6.1 Main Results

Summarized Answers to the Research Questions

In the face of the historical discrimination of favela residents and their homes as well as the perpetuation of their criminalization that result from the negative favela narrative constructed by mainstream media, I wanted to find out *which current strategies local community journalists and media initiatives from Rio de Janeiro’s favelas pursue in order to change their communal representations in the media.*

The analysis of the empirical findings from the interviews and participant observations, in combination with the discussion of theoretical concepts drawn from the literature review, showed that the strategies pursued by community media initiatives to confront their representations in mainstream media can be categorized into:

a) strategies to communicate counter-representations outside mainstream media through counter-fact storytelling, and through collective denunciations and posts on social media;

b) strategies to actively insert counter-representations into mainstream media by providing hyper-local, real-time news from favelas, by utilizing the contact to mainstream media journalists, by communicating to public-opinion-influencers, by establishing strategic partnerships with international media outlets, and by engaging in activist events.

These two main strategies to communicate their own representations address different target audiences and thus pursue differing aims. In the case that community communication is aimed at favela residents, its function is to fill the information gap about issues relevant to favela inhabitants which are not addressed by mainstream media and to build awareness about their reality discussed from an inside perspective. When communication is directed to non-favela residents, the objective is the change of public opinion and discourse about favelas.

In the following, I will present the additional major findings to the sub-questions of my research topic which I formulated in chapter 1.3 which contribute to a more nuanced

understanding of the representational strategies of community media initiatives described above.

- *Which objectives do the community media initiatives have?*

The analysis of the objectives that the community media initiatives pursue revealed that their main aim is to challenge the mainstream media discourse on favelas and dispute the mystification of favela as a merely violent space. The fact that community communication also serves as a security tool for the local inhabitants or includes social projects are new aspects that literature on community communication has not addressed so far. I also found, that the focus of the content depends on the nature of the community media initiative, which according to my field research, can be divided into locally acting favela-specific ones and into those that act overarchingly in several favelas. Likewise, the motivations of the founder of the initiative also shape its objective.

- *How do community journalists understand themselves within this context? How does their engagement affect their personal development and lives?*

As for the motivations of the community journalists to engage in community media production, my findings depict that they want to bring about positive changes for their environment by countering favela representations in mainstream media and by promoting citizenship and participation. However, the interviews revealed that they do not refer to themselves as “activists” but their motivation is always linked to the wish of becoming an agent of social change. Apart from that, they also want to gain job experience.

Accordingly, the assessment of the impact of community communication showed that the engagement of community journalists does not only empower themselves but also their environment as critical conscientization about the own reality plays a major role. In addition, the possibility for having a platform to communicate counter-narratives to mainstream media is crucial.

- *Which structural barriers do community journalists identify for their work?*

Concerning the sub-question of the current obstacles that community media initiatives have to face, the interviewees mentioned the lack of financial resources as the major challenge to retain community journalists that are pulled away by the job market. Another major obstacle, as it is presented by literature on political economy of communication, is the sustained power of mainstream media due to monopolized ownership structures and an absent progressive legal framework.

- *What role do they attribute to networks and cooperation?*

The community journalists' opinion on forming a network of community media initiatives is ambiguous. On the one hand, they fear a loss of autonomy in a formalized network. On the other hand, it is seen as a possibility to exert collective power. However, they valorize the informal networks and social ties which they have with other local initiatives and organizations. I consider this aspect as undervalued by existing literature on strategies for social movements.

- *How do they understand the democratization of media coverage about favelas?*

In answering the research sub-question of community journalists' understanding of the democratization of media coverage about favelas, their views were much broader than presented by contemporary literature. They were ranging from the needed ability for critical media analysis, to a plurality of voices and the power to communicate about oneself as well as a redistribution of the government budget for advertising.

Discussion of the Research Outcome

My main goal for this thesis was to illustrate the potential of community communication as an empowerment tool for marginalized groups that are not (adequately) represented in the public sphere of mainstream media in Brazil and elsewhere. This thesis demonstrated that community communication by favela journalists is central for changing representations about favelas. Both literature on the formation of stereotypes (e.g. Bhabha, 2012) and mechanisms of news coverage about favelas (e.g. Paiva & Nóra, 2008) have sustained empirical findings which prove that there are possibilities to change favela representations in mainstream media by countering public discourse and opinion about these spaces.

A major conclusion from this research was that rigid definitions of community communication in academic literature do not reflect the diversity of community media in practice. Especially the emergence of online media requires a re-thinking of traditional conceptualizations of community communication channels and the construction of counter-narratives in the “network society”, in reference to Castells (2002). With respect to these findings, this thesis contributed to an understanding of community communication by favela journalists as part of a broader struggle of favela residents against social injustices and human rights violations, which Custódio referred to as “favela media activism” (2016). This research study has enriched this discussion by

complementarily analyzing community communication with respect to the representational strategies of community media initiatives and the structural conditions of the media-scape in Brazil.

Hence, one key result of this thesis is that the conscientization of favela residents is as important as the changing of public opinion about favelas. The study supports previous research by Custódio (2016) who recognized the favela residents' communication processes turned inwards to the favelas and its potential to contribute to the articulation of favela counter-publics (p. 225). My field research was able to add that these communication processes are likewise strategically directed at non-favela-residents, influencers of public opinion, including international media outlets, in order to reach a wider audience.

Furthermore, I showed that Paulo Freire's approach is not only relevant for analyzing media education concepts (see e.g. in Custódio, 2016) but also for political awareness building and emancipatory actions. His approach is especially relevant for understanding the importance and impact of community communication for changing representations and for leading to social transformation. Freire's (2014) concepts for "dialogical conscientization" and "action and reflection" were central for understanding that critical media analysis plays a key role for the work of community journalists and their empowerment, understood as the emancipation from stereotypical outsider-representations.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that considering the various dimensions that shape community communication on Rio's favelas is essential for a full comprehension of the complexity of the issue. A major outcome in this sense was the connection of the analysis of representational strategies of community media initiatives to the structural obstacles of a monopolized Brazilian media market. Thus, another major result of this study is the conclusion that in order to trigger social transformations, following Freire in the sense that oppressive structures are to be recognized and overcome, structural issues have to be targeted at the same time – namely the democratization of media-scape. By providing the contextual knowledge about the monopolized media-scape and its entanglements with economic and political elites, I emphasized the importance of viewing the efforts of counter-narratives by community media initiatives within the social mobilizations of actors such as FNDC.

Contemporary literature on advocacy networks (Stammers & Eschle, 2005) and on community media's struggles in transnational policy arenas for social change (Milan, 2009, 2013) provided relevant suggestions for how collective power could make use of open policy windows, while maintaining the autonomy of grassroots initiatives. As my experiences in the field showed, this is an important and highly valued aspect which distinguishes them from commercial media. Accordingly, instead of falling into the formalization trap of a big network, more informal advocacy networks could support the already existing interpersonal ties and help in overcoming some of the main challenges for community media which I have identified to be of primarily financial nature. However, advocacy networks could also serve as access providers to institutional actors and policy makers and open possibilities for gaining government funds.

Recent research on community media has considered the new media's potential to disrupt traditional media outlets, while literature on social movements and activism strategies on online media has highlighted their participatory potential for grassroots organizations (Castells, 2013; Couldry, 2002, 2015; Lievrouw, 2011). My investigation has confirmed the growing importance of social media for community media initiatives and highlighted their dialogical communication possibilities. In addition, I could link my findings on the strategies utilized by community media initiatives to communicate their counter-representations to the possibilities and challenges of the new media technologies. On the one hand, online media allows for easier distribution of favela-counter-narratives and support literature that attributes a democratic potential to new media (e.g. Castells, 2013). On the other hand, my findings reminded that there are still internet access restrictions for the poorer population and that information, once disseminated, can have uncontrollable effects.

Contribution to Latin American and Media and Communication Studies

Concerning the contribution of this thesis to the sub-discipline of Latin American Studies, I can conclude that this thesis shines a new light on the importance of community media in Latin America with respect to its emancipatory potential for marginalized groups, especially in connection to the work of the Brazilian Paulo Freire. Thus, I successfully fulfilled the principle of the Master Program of Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies due to the interdisciplinary design of this research.

With respect to this thesis's contribution to existing research, I also consider my interlinkage of different disciplinary perspectives to be enrichment to contemporary literature on community media. The respective outcomes can be seen as an addition to the results of Custódio's study on "Favela Media Activism" (2016) as well as to literature on new media for social movements (such as Lievrouw, 2011) and community communication studies. This thesis also serves as an example of PAR in general.

Moreover, the focus on the perspective of community journalists from favelas has shed new light onto their opinions on current issues that are relevant to them. Therefore, the next section addresses this research's practical implementations which I consider to be relevant primarily for the practices of community journalists and their initiatives, as well as for researchers and organizations that support their struggle for favela counter-representations.

6.2 Practical Implementations

The findings of this study implicate that looking at the potential of community communication and media from the perspective of the community communicators is central as to avoid theoretical analyses that are incongruent with actual practices.

- *Foster critical awareness building and dialogical communication*

Hence, this thesis suggests focusing on the fostering of critical media analysis abilities of community journalists, as well as of the community members. Finding ways to engage them in the production process of the contents of community media or with the dialogical communication opportunities of social media is also essential. This leads to their empowerment through enacting their role as citizens which has been proven to be the key for the successful implementation of social change. Consequently, community communication practitioners should focus on the Freirean combination of "action and reflection" which was shown to encourage dialogical conscientization.

Furthermore, for a growing favela-counter-public, the collective power is crucial in challenging favela narratives. In the end, the exertion of this collective power can take two (simultaneous) forms: a variety and pulverization of the small-scale initiatives or a formation of a formal network. Which strategies community communicators pursue depends on their objectives and on what is practically implementable.

For those initiatives whose objectives were to scale up and build a bigger network, the research findings might serve as a guideline and reference point for what seems to be important to other small-scale initiatives with the same goal:

- *Focus on local networks first*

This research showed that community media initiatives are already well networked in the sense of social ties with friends. There is an existing informal network structure which connects with other local initiatives, projects, and organizations. For instance, community media initiatives can join initiatives that comprise several favelas such as *Voz da Comunidade* and support local projects such as *Data_Labe*'s community media map.³¹

After having explored the already existing local networks, it also makes sense for community media initiatives to direct their attention to bigger national advocacy networks which might be a source for financial as well as non-financial support for their work.

- *Recognize the importance of necessary structural changes*

Since the research results recommend that on a long-term perspective, it appears indispensable to challenge the structures of the media-scape and engage in the struggle for media democratization, community media initiatives could take advantage of advocacy networks and support the efforts of social movements and organizations such as FNDC.

- *Value both online and offline activities*

Moreover, this study's problematization of a still restricted Internet access implies that community media initiatives should find ways to also reach those that are not connected online. Although scarce financial resources might require creative solutions to address this problem, the struggle for countering favela stereotypes and bringing about social transformation is connected to a broader scope of actions. This suggests making use of community projects as well as taking part in public debates and demonstrations that are connected to the objectives of community media.

³¹ Data_Labe is currently mapping the different community media initiatives in Rio de Janeiro in order to support their networking efforts. See the project here: <http://datalabe.org/sobre-mapas/> (last accessed on August 30, 2018)

6.3 Limitations and Outlook

A major limitation of this qualitative master's thesis is its small scale. During my timed field research, I was only able to investigate a small portion of the more than 150 community media initiatives that exist in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Consequently, the fast-changing environment and diversity of the favelas, that conditions the nature of its community vehicles, might restrict the research results' applicability. In the same way, time restrictions and experiences during the field research did not allow to adhere to every proposition of the activist research methodology which certainly limited this thesis's outcomes. Moreover, although the interdisciplinary design of the research study has certainly enriched the results, its scope has limited the depth of the analysis of certain issues.

Due to these limitations, I would like to highlight the valuable contribution that further interdisciplinary PAR might constitute for both researchers and local initiatives. Equally important, I propose an extension of the research scope to additional favelas and community media initiatives in order for a more comprehensive understanding of the variety of community media practices.

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis may contribute to future research on the nature of networks of community media and favela journalists for examining the social dynamics between these groups and elaborating the possibilities of collaboration networks. Finally, further research on the chances of internationalization for community media initiatives also appears relevant.

To conclude, this master's thesis's questioning whether community communication can help to transform social reality for the better is one that, ultimately, only the praxis of the favela media initiatives themselves will answer. Hopefully, this thesis has contributed to the discussion of the potential transformative agency of community journalists and the future of community media within the abundant possibilities and challenges of the complexity of the media-scape in the digital age.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Map of the Location of Rio de Janeiro's Favelas

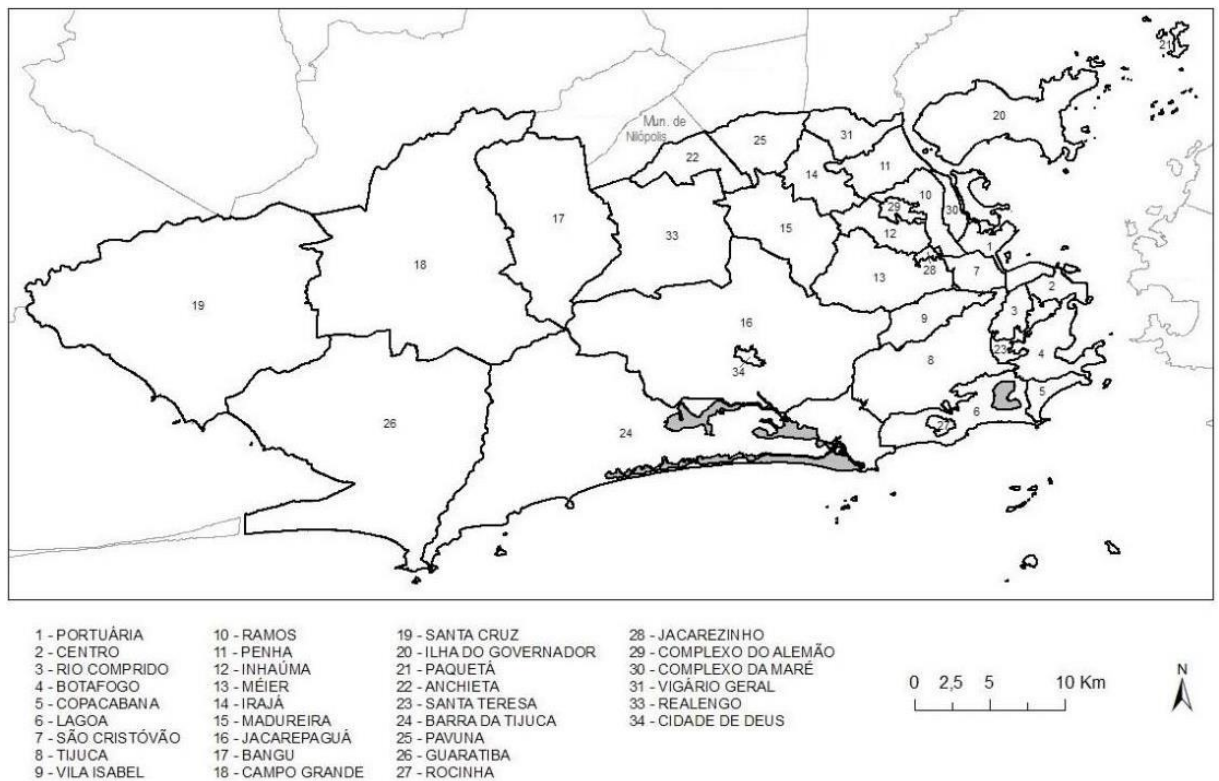


Figure 15: Administrative regions of the city of Rio de Janeiro (Custódio 2016, p. 264)

8.2 Interview Guide

Introdução:

As questões servirão para o perfil no ROW e para a minha tese de mestrado – que aborda o papel das mídias comunitárias na democratização de produção de conhecimento sobre favelas através de cooperações e redes, analisado desde a visão dos jornalistas comunitários.

Papel pessoal na iniciativa de mídia comunitária

1. Qual é o seu papel no/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]?
2. Quando você começou a trabalhar para o/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]?
3. Porque você começou a trabalhar com o/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]?
4. Você teve outras experiências com mídia comunitária ou em movimentos sociais antes de trabalhar para o/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]?
5. Quais mudanças você observou, em você, desde que você começou a trabalhar com o/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]?
6. O que outros moradores na sua comunidade acham do fato de você ser um jornalista comunitário? Como você vê isso?

Iniciativa de mídia comunitária: veículos e canais

7. Você pode me contar um pouco sobre como o/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] começou? Você sabe quem a/o fundou e por que?
8. Quais são os principais objetivos da/o [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]?
9. Quais veículos a/o [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] utiliza? Quais são as vantagens de usar p.ex. Facebook e outras plataformas de mídia social?
10. Quem é o público-alvo desses veículos?

Jornal (no caso de ter)

11. Como é financiado o jornal? É impresso?
12. Onde é distribuído o jornal?
13. É grátis ou é pago?

Jornalistas comunitárias

14. Quantas pessoas trabalham para o/a [iniciativa de mídia comunitária]? Eles recebem um salário?
15. Todos os jornalistas são moradores de [favela]?
16. Eles têm a oportunidade de receber treinamento com jornalistas ou não? Vocês oferecem cursos de formação?
17. Os jornalistas escrevem sobre áreas da/o [favela] específicas ou sobre os tópicos específicos? Como eles trabalham no dia-a-dia?
18. Onde você e os outros jornalistas trabalham? Tem um escritório?

Impacto e desafios

19. Na sua opinião, qual é o impacto da/o [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] na comunidade?
20. Qual é a importância da/o [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] para os moradores?
21. Quais são os maiores desafios enfrentados pela/o [iniciativa de mídia comunitária], no passado ou agora?
22. Quais são os planos ou metas da/o [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] para o futuro?

Cobertura sobre a favela na grande mídia e democratização

23. O que você acha da forma que a grande mídia fala sobre favelas? Existem histórias particulares que deveriam receber mais cobertura?
25. Como deveria ser a cobertura das favelas na mídia de uma forma democrática? Na sua opinião, como a/o [iniciativas de mídia comunitária] contribui na democratização das informações sobre favelas?

Redes e cooperação

26. A/O [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] trabalha com algumas outras mídias comunitárias dentro ou fora da sua favela? Qual é a relação com elas?
27. Quais chances e desafios você atribue a uma formação de uma rede maior de iniciativas de várias favelas?
28. A/O [iniciativa de mídia comunitária] tem parcerias com ONGs, p.ex. como *RioOnWatch*? Por que entraram nessa parceria? Tem outras parcerias?
29. Na sua opinião, como deveria ser uma cooperação entre a grande mídia e veículos comunitários para cobrir os assuntos que importam às favelas?
30. Qual foi o lugar mais distante, que você saiba, no qual alguém tenha lido uma matéria sua?

(Dados pessoais: idade, onde nasceu/mora, formação, profissão)

8.3 List of Interviews

Community Communicators (favela residents engaged in community media initiatives)				
Code	Age*, Gender	Education/ Profession	Function in Community Media Initiative*	Date/ Duration of Interview
I - 1	female, 23 years	Psychology Student	Community Journalist	January 9, 2018 30min
I - 2	male	Cinema Studies/ Researcher	Coordinator	January 26, 2018 1h 04min
I - 3	female, 20 years	Journalism Student	Community Journalist	February 2, 2018 45min
I - 4	male, 31 years	Journalism Studies/ Health Communicator	Community Journalist, Photographer	February 9, 2018 1h 27min
I - 5	female, 35 years	Housewife	Founder	February 28, 2018 59min
I - 6	male	Journalism Studies/ Cameraman	Founder	March 3, 2018 1h 10min
I - 7	female, 23 years	Journalism Student	Community Journalist, Editor	March 13, 2018 26min

Community Media Practitioners (NGOs and academia)			
Name	NGO/Institution	Position*	Date/ Duration of Interview
Dr. Raquel Paiva	UFRJ (ECO)	Professor, LECC coordinator	December 7, 2017 1h 26min
Dr. Theresa Williamson	Catalytic Communities (RioOnWatch)	Founder	February 1, 2018 47min
André Fernandes	Agência de Notícias das Favelas	Founder	February 7, 2018 48min

* at the time of the interview

8.4 Code Guideline

Code	Subcategory
Personal role in the initiative	
Motivation to engage in community communication	be an agent of change
	promote education for community
	gain job experience
	fight for rights as citizen
Personal experience	journalism studies
	working with international mainstream media
Community Media's Content	
Community Media Channels	New Media
	Internet site
	Facebook
	Instagram
	Twitter
	Youtube channel
	problematic issue of lack of Internet access
Community Media Objectives	sustainability
	self-representation through opportunity to speak up
	provide local information
	support of local community
	educate on citizenship and promote consciousness of rights
	critical formation of residents
	combat the mystification of favelas as violent spaces
	inclusion of residents in content production
	foster network of different community communicators
	security function
Community Media's Communication Strategy	perspective from within
	target audience
	usage of personal professional contacts
	counter-narratives
Community Media Journalist Formation Course	learning model
	organization of the course
	content
	conscientization
Community Media's Challenges	not-for-profit orientation results in missing monetary funds
	capitalist pressure from media market
	missing infrastructure

	violence
	not enough community journalists and articles produced
Community Media's Impact for the community	different perspective of their favela than in mainstream media
	empowerment
	charity, social support
	trust
Community Media's Impact for the community journalists	job opportunity (being known for one's work)
	self-development
	empowerment
Community Media's Partnerships	with NGOs
	with local institutions or initiatives
	with other community media initiatives
Community Media's Aims for the Future	own infrastructure
	financial recourses
	social projects
	continuity of initiative
	scale-up
	include other formats
Mainstream Media	perception of national mainstream media's coverage of favelas
	perception of mainstream media journalists
	perception of international mainstream media's coverage of favelas
	strategies to confront mainstream media
	strategies to insert into mainstream media
	impact on public opinion
Personal understanding of democratization of media	challenge power and spaces of speech of mainstream media
	distribute <i>verba social/publicitária</i>
	right to communicate
	plurality of voices
	responsibility
Community Media Network	opinion of idea to form a big network
	challenges
	possibility to communicate collective aims
	opinion on nature of collaboration
	connections to local activism groups
Understanding of community communication	more informal, not undertaken by journalist professionals