

CITIZENS' MEDIA IN RIO'S FAVELAS AMIDST THE 2016 SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES:  
A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTORS ON RIOONWATCH.ORG

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to better understand the effect of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games on the host city, Rio de Janeiro. In particular, this research is focused on the residents of Rio's favelas and the topics, issues, opinions, and experiences expressed in citizens' media before, during, and after the Olympics. Citizens' media has emerged in favela communities as inhabitants have accessed ICTs and the Internet and as Rio has transformed into an Olympic City in the last decade. Using a method of thematic analysis, this review of journalism from the Community Contributors section of RioOnWatch.org, a Rio de Janeiro-based media collective, provides a citizen's perspective of events taking place in the favelas, which counter traditional media depictions of the urban periphery. In this examination of narratives five predominant themes are identified: (1) portrayals of the favelas in media, (2) concerns regarding public policies and political processes, (3) discontent with urban violence and the UPP program, (4) expressions of culture, and (5) the impact of the Olympics.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

For over a century, a large population of people in the city of Rio de Janeiro<sup>1</sup>, Brazil has been systematically marginalized. Communities known as *favelas*, whose residents are called *favelados*, have been historically excluded from society. The favelas were built out of the basic need for shelter, which freed slaves in Brazil could not obtain. For many years, the government referred to these unsanctioned districts as the city's slave quarters and hence neglected the favelas and their residents (Perlman, 2005; Freeman, 2014; Cuadros, 2016). Indeed, it was not until the 1970s that favelas were recognized as a part of the city (Perlman, 2005). Because of well-established prejudiced views and discrimination against freed slaves, the government's negligence, and broader society's disdain toward the favelas, outsiders have misunderstood the people and cultures borne of these urban boroughs. Furthermore, interpretations of the favelas in mainstream media and popular media have considerably distorted what life is like for people in these communities. Overtime, delusions of the favelas have remained if not worsened. With Rio accepting the bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, favela residents have begun to claim their narratives in a public form through citizens' media.

Rio 2016, officially known as the Games of the XXXI Olympiad, which has been called '*O Momento Rio*' or 'Rio's Moment,' marks the first time in history that a South American country—in fact, any country of the Global South<sup>2</sup>—has hosted the Olympic Games. In doing so, Rio de Janeiro has taken on a media spotlight. The Olympics is designed for and intended to attract extensive media coverage. The Games are considered to be the most

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<sup>1</sup> Rio de Janeiro is the capital city of Rio de Janeiro state, which is one of Brazil's 27 states.

<sup>2</sup> The Global South is made up of developing countries of South America, Central America, Africa, and parts of Asia including the Middle East. Countries of the Global South generally share histories of colonialism.

effective international media platform in the world reaching billions of people in over 200 countries and territories (Bacalao-Fleury, 2011). However, a sporting mega-event of this scale invites media of all kinds, which take various approaches to showcasing places, people, and cultures.

Official Olympic media transmit a constructed, branded image to the world. Through this practice, the host city's citizens do not have control of their own messages and stories (Garcia, 2008). As a result, people in mega-event host cities lose agency in defining themselves and their communities. Disseminating constructed images of the host city increases the risk of local-national misrepresentations, simplifications, and criticisms (Garcia, 2008). Mainstream and popular media have subjected the people of the favelas to portrayals that largely generalize, stigmatize, and disfigure their lifestyles and experiences. Moreover, Olympic-related media sustain and perpetuate stereotypes of the favelas. Subsequently, to counter delusive notions of the favela population in dominant media, citizens from Rio's favelas have taken to online platforms to express their perspectives.

Citizens' media are communication processes that allow common people to voice and discuss their identities, histories, cultures, and concerns (Rodriguez, 2001). Rather than being subjected to mainstream and popular media portrayals, individuals, organizations, and communities can assert their positions by challenging and changing the mediasphere. By partaking in media production and distribution, people are able to share their stories with integrity and authenticity. Citizens' media "empower individuals within marginalized communities to create media that reflects the complexity of their lived experiences" by crafting their own narratives (Stuart, 2015, p. 230).



By consuming media prior to the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, I had preconceived notions about the Marvelous City and *cariocas*—the people of Rio. In some cases, media depict the favelas as vibrant, colorful, rhythmic places full of samba and capoeira<sup>3</sup>. In other cases, media emphasize violence and crime of impoverished drug gangs in the favelas. Seeing these dramatizations of favela culture, I began wondering, what would these people say about their communities, their lives, and their futures? To learn more about the people who live in these seemingly mysterious, unreachable zones of Rio, I will examine an online source of hyper-local perspectives. The purpose of this research is to better understand the diverse realities of favela residents in Rio de Janeiro by exploring citizens' media emerging from the favelas amidst the 2016 Summer Olympic Games.

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<sup>3</sup> Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art that combines music, dance, and acrobatic fighting.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To explore this phenomenon requires a brief background on Rio's favelas, a discussion of representations the favelas in media, an application of media framing theory, and a definition of citizens' media.

### **Favelas**

In 1889, Brazil's modern republic began under the motto "Ordem e Progresso" or "order and progress," which are the words inscribed on the Brazilian national flag still today. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, this slogan called for economic progress for the elites as well as physical expulsion and spatial segregation for people whom the elites deemed to be marginal, outcasts, and uncivilized (Pino, 2015). Just a year prior, in 1888, slavery in Brazil was abolished, which marked changes in the socio-spatial landscape of cities in Brazil, particularly in Rio, which was the country's capital for nearly two centuries. At the end of slavery, there was a massive migration of people from the rural countryside to urban areas, where people hoped to find work (Williamson, 2015). Most citizens were kept out of the formal job and housing markets therefore began building squatter settlements in the hillsides (Pino, 1997; Williamson, 2015; Harris, 2016b).

Squatter settlements, assembled illegitimately without oversight of public authorities, building codes, and infrastructure for basic sanitation systems, are called *favelas*. Favelas are dense, highly populated neighborhoods, which are characterized by irregular buildings, narrow streets, winding alleyways, and dwellings built one on top of the other. Over decades, especially in the mid-1900s, more and more people built homes in the hillsides due to lack of access to affordable housing in the city (Williamson, 2015; Harris, 2016b). Today there are nearly 1,000 favelas in Rio where approximately 25

percent of the city's population lives (Perlman, 2005; Hurrell, 2011 Steinbrink, 2012; Williamson, 2015; Harris, 2016b). Favelas are compact residential regions that make up the urban periphery of the city (see *Figure 1*).



*Figure 1.* The neighborhood Vila Laboriaux in the favela Rocinha (Ohrem-Leclef, 2013). Retrieved from [goo.gl/7lzhHY](https://goo.gl/7lzhHY)

Beginning during the massive migration from the countryside to the city, migrants—many of whom were freed slaves—were seen as maladapted to modern city life and therefore responsible for their own poverty and their failure to obtain work and housing in the formal job and housing markets (Perlman, 2005). Favelados were viewed as “other,” marginal—not an important, proper part of society. Since their inception, these squatter settlements, officially labeled by the Brazilian census as “subnormal

agglomerations” (p. 9), are thought to be urban blight—“sores on the beautiful body of the city” (p. 15) because of their somewhat precarious appearance to outsiders (Perlman, 2005). Using the ideology of marginality with its “blaming the victim” narrative, policies to remove favelas and forcefully displace the favela population is a reoccurring scheme in Rio over many decades (Perlman, 2005, p. 18).

A century after the abolishment of slavery, in 1988, democracy was reestablished in Brazil after twenty years of military dictatorship. There was an assumption that the right to vote would give the urban poor stronger voice in the political arena (Perlman, 2005). In an effort to address the Brazilian government’s historic neglect of the favelas, the Federal Constitution established Article 183 regarding Adverse Possession. In the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Article 183 declares:

An individual who possesses an urban area of up to two hundred and fifty square meters, for five years, without interruption or opposition, using it as his or his family’s home, shall acquire domain of it, provided that he does not own another urban or rural property.

Many favelas in Rio are eligible for title under Article 183 of the Constitution; however, in order for titles to be granted, citizens must present documentation of their inhabitation to the government. Some favela occupants have successfully claimed their homes as their property; however, many residents are still amassing evidence to utilize this right (Catalytic Communities, n.d.).

**Political and spatial exclusion and marginality.** Rio is often considered to be a divided city—separated between *as gente do asfalto e as gente do morro*—the people of the asphalt and the people of the hill (Perlman, 2005; Arias, 2006; Harris, 2016b). Throughout

Rio's history, the two realms of the city have struggled to exist harmoniously due to the stark separation between the formal and the informal city. There are features of favelas that prevent the full inclusion of residents into larger society; for example, many homes are not assigned physical addresses. As a result, the population has little opportunity for political participation and representation. During political campaigns, there is a pattern of candidates promising public services to favela residents in exchange for their votes, yet often, projects are abandoned after the inaugurations of elected officials (Freeman, 2014). Although there appears to be an absence of the state in favela communities, Freeman (2014) asserts that rather, "the state has a certain dysfunctional presence in these communities that is different from its role in the formal city" (p. 13). This presence comes in the form of political bribery, forced evictions, and police invasion and occupation—systems that preserve marginality by "an unjust and corrupt system that is complicit in the reproduction of inequality" (Perlman, 2005, p. 12).

Perlman (2005) declares that today, "the only remaining distinction between the favelas and the rest of the city is the deeply-rooted stigma that adheres to them" (p. 10). The population is not economically and politically marginal but rather exploited, manipulated, and repressed; not socially and culturally marginal but stigmatized and excluded (Perlman, 2005). Demystifying the favela, Perlman (2005) clarifies:

Favelas can no longer be defined by their 'illegality' (as they were originally when people invaded open land on the hillsides), as most now have *de facto* tenure. They can no longer be defined by lack of urban services, since over time almost all have obtained access to water, sewage, and electricity. They cannot even be defined as 'free' places to live as there is now a thriving internal real estate market for rental

and purchase. Finally, they cannot be defined as communities of misery or chronic poverty as not all the people in favelas are poor and not all the urban poor live in favelas. (p. 10)

With this stance in mind, it is crucial to make the distinction between marginal and marginalized. Rio's favelas have a rich history of social, economic, environmental, and cultural contributions to the city. In fact, many famous features of Brazilian culture have either emerged or further evolved in the favelas (Williamson, 2015). The favelas and their residents are not marginal; they are an undeniably important part of Rio, its history, urban landscape, and culture. Rather, favela residents have been marginalized—treated as insignificant by long-standing societal systems. These citizens have been resourceful and resilient in the face of disintegration, manipulation, and oppression.

### **Favelas in Media**

Not only have citizens been mistreated by the government, favela residents have also been misrepresented by the media. There are several different types of media that contribute to the impressions of outsiders, including mainstream journalism, popular media, and recently, Olympic media. These media have their own motives and frames, which influence their audiences' perceptions of life in the favelas.

**Favelas in mainstream media.** In mainstream media, favelas are depicted as places of poverty, violence, and crime. "Favela" is often translated as "slum" or "shantytown," which are terms that media often use to describe favelas. These terms connote negative characteristics, which stigmatize these low-income neighborhoods (Baroni, 2011). Ramos and Paiva (2007) conducted studies on Brazil's daily newspapers

and found that journalistic reports, especially in Rio, almost always regard favelas as “exclusive places of violence” (as cited in Baroni, 2011, p. 50).

There are countless examples of mainstream media that extend negative perspectives and stigma of the favelas. The German news site, Spiegel Online, released an article by Cathrin Gilbert (2011) saying, “The city gave up trying to solve the misery in their poverty-stricken districts... the ghettos [are] islands of violence in the heart of the city, ruled over by powerful drug gangs that shape the lives—and deaths—of slum residents” (para. 8). This is a typical description of life in Rio’s favelas. Media claim that favelas are neighborhoods of misery, where drug gangs run rampant, committing acts of violence and crime.

Another example of mainstream media about favelas is Adam Peacock’s 2014 article “Beautiful Chaos” published by Fox Sports. Peacock reports on his experience of visiting the favela Complexo do Alemão, which he claimed was “like visiting another world” (para. 1). Peacock describes the limited opportunities for youth who grow up in the favelas. However, Peacock largely generalizes favela lifestyles and experiences by saying, “Many [children] don’t have stable home lives... parents are either desperately trying to make ends meet, or, more likely, trapped by drug addiction” (para. 13). Favela residents are not a population of drug users. In general, drug use in Brazil is notably low compared to the United States and other countries; however, national and international media are devoted to exaggerating and overproducing drug-related stories within favelas to criminalize residents (Misse & Vargas, 2010). Peacock reflects on his visit to the favela saying, “The stories and sights depress the soul, which is further crushed upon realizing this is just one among thousands like it in Brazil” (para. 17).

These media stories, which amplify poverty, violence, and crime, are examples of the dominant narrative of the favelas. Media fail to recognize and represent the vast majority of favela residents who are common, working people. Assumptions that favelas are bleak, desolate ghettos and favelados are fugitive outcasts are stereotypes that perpetuate negative views on these communities.

**Favelas in popular media.** The favelas have appeared in popular culture in many movies, music videos, and even videogames. One of the most well-known films that has influenced conceptions of favelas is the 2003 film *City of God*. Adapted from the book by the same name, *City of God* was filmed in Rio de Janeiro in the favela Cidade de Deus. Characters in the film are extremely cruel and murderous, suggesting that people—even children—in the favelas, are inherently vicious. According to Williamson (2015) the movie *City of God* is an excellent example of how popular media has instilled misconceptions of the favelas. Although the favela had been presented to international audiences before, no film before *City of God* had exposed favela communities to such a large number of viewers and tourists nor directly inspired so many narratives about their lives (Freire-Medeiros, 2011). Content in the movie perpetuate stereotypes of favelas as poor, violent, uncivilized, and run by drug trafficking (Freire-Medeiros, 2011).

Another example of favelas in popular culture is in the videogame, *Max Payne 3*. The storyline of the videogame follows the main character, Max Payne, who travels into a favela of São Paulo. The favela is illustrated as being desolate, dirty, and dangerous. The videogame player is robbed, mugged, and tasked to navigate favela neighborhoods, which are portrayed as convoluted and run down. The game presents inhabitants of the favela as outwardly angry and volatile toward non-locals. Shooting and killing certain residents is



one of the game objectives. Although there are a few positive elements incorporated into the game storyline, the gaming environment is essentially a battleground designed for violent combat. Other videogames, such as the popular *Call of Duty* franchise, also use the favelas as a game environment. In reality, favelas are communities full of homes, families, children, schools, markets, churches, and so on. These kinds of depictions are not only inaccurate but also harmful to people who live in favelas.

**Favelas in pre-Olympics-related journalism.** Prior to the Olympics, the mainstream media questioned Rio's readiness to host the Games. News commentators declared that Rio was in a state of chaos. News stories highlighted problems related to security, safety, and health for Olympics visitors. In some cases, Rio's favelas and favela residents were deemed a threat to the safety of tourists and visitors.



Figure 2. "Deadly Games" (Thompson, 2011). Retrieved from [goo.gl/vkwr8Z](http://goo.gl/vkwr8Z)

Figure 2 is from ESPN senior writer, Wright Thompson's 2011 report, titled "Deadly Games," in which he refers to the formal and informal urban areas of Rio as "the two Rios," insisting they are in collision due to the city hosting the Olympics (para. 4). Thompson calls

the favelas, “Rio’s guilty conscience” and describes the communities as “urban slums” existing “outside civilized society” (para. 5). This image is of Rio’s famous Maracanã Stadium, where the 2014 World Cup and the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2016 Summer Olympics were held. A military police officer has his weapon drawn with favela structures in the backdrop of the image. The article highlights violence between the military police and drug gangs saying the stadium has “cops and drug-trafficking gangbangers in a showdown” (para. 7). Thompson states, “Rio has less than three years to fix a crisis a century in the making,” referring to relations between the state and the favelas before hosting the 2014 World Cup (para. 9).

Just two weeks before the opening ceremony, the BBC released a news piece by South American correspondent, Wyre Davies (2016), who reported, “Rio de Janeiro is one of the world’s most beguiling cities and will provide a stunning backdrop for the Olympics, but it has an ominously dark side too” (2:30). Davies (2016) describes the return of drug gangs to Rio’s ocean front favelas saying, “There have been more murders and attacks, and with the Olympic Games taking place down in the tourist area on Copacabana Beach, there is a real concern that this violence could spill over during the Games themselves” (0:37).

*The Washington Post* quoted Brazilian soccer player Rivaldo Vítor Borba Ferreira, known simply as Rivaldo, who said before the Olympics, “Things are getting uglier here every day...I advise everyone with plans to visit Brazil for the Olympics in Rio to stay in their country of origin” (Bieler, 2016, para. 2). Bieler (2016) goes on to list a number of concerns such as Zika virus, crime, violence, political turmoil, and social upheaval.

These representations of Rio prior to the Olympics do not align with the interests of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) nor the Brazilian Olympic Committee (BOC)

given their goals of appealing to a global audience with clean images of the city.

Understanding Rio's motives for hosting this mega-event, as well as the IOC's specific media interests, are crucial to understanding why and how favelas have been targeted and treated.

### **Olympics Hosting Motives**

At the turn of the century, opinion leaders projected four 'emerging' countries with potential to be global economic powers—Brazil, Russia, India, and China—known by the acronym BRIC (Pelle, 2007; Wilson & Purushothaman, 2006). South Africa was identified as the fifth emerging country in 2010 making the acronym BRICS. These countries have shown promising urban development and market growth in the recent years. Aiming to gain capital and a position in the world economy, BRICS have been investing in long-term, international projects that generate profit, expedite infrastructure, and attract media coverage. In the last decade, each of these five countries has hosted a sporting mega-event. China hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, India hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, South Africa hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Johannesburg, Russia hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, and finally, Brazil hosted the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

**Olympic media interests.** The IOC is an international, non-governmental, non-for-profit organization that serves as the official sports federation and the official governing institution of the Olympic Games (Bacalao-Fleury, 2011). The IOC has many functions but its main responsibility is ensuring the regular celebration of the Olympic Games. The IOC is highly interested in media portrayals of the Games and in many ways relies on the media to

promote the Olympic Movement<sup>4</sup> and the Olympic Charter<sup>5</sup>. The Olympic Charter explains the mission and the role of the IOC. The document guarantees, “The IOC takes all necessary steps in order to ensure the fullest coverage by the different media and the widest possible audience in the world for the Olympic Games” (IOC, 2015, p. 92).

**Olympic expectations.** Applying to host the Olympic Games is a complex and expensive process. When a city accepts a bid to host the Olympics, the IOC “provides potential host countries with a comprehensive catalogue of obligatory requirements”—the fulfillment of which must be guaranteed by host governments (Steinbrink, 2013, p. 130). Requirements to host the Olympic Games include ensuring prosperity for the IOC, which means that events must be held in world-class venues with sufficient capacity for spectators, excellent transportation systems for tourists, and hotels to accommodate visitors (Steinbrink, 2013). Furthermore, “optimum international media coverage has to be guaranteed so that commercially effective images of happiness and heroism” can be shown to the world (Steinbrink, 2013, p. 130).

In return, hosting a sporting mega-event, such as the Olympics, puts the city on the international communication agenda, making the city a destination and giving it exposure to potential markets and investors all over the world. Because of the IOC’s standards and

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<sup>4</sup> The Olympic Movement encompasses organizations, athletes, and other persons who agree to be guided by the Olympic Charter. The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport and practiced in accordance with Olympism and its values. (IOC, 2015, p. 17)

<sup>5</sup> The Olympic Charter is the main policy document of the IOC. The document states, “The mission of the IOC is to promote Olympism throughout the world.” The Olympic Charter claims three main purposes: (1) to establish principles and values of Olympism—“a philosophy of life,” (2) to serve as IOC law, and (3) to define the rights and obligations of the four main constituents [IOC, International Federations (IF), National Olympic Committees (NOC), Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG)] of the Olympic Movement. (IOC, 2015, p. 11 & p. 13)

ideals along with the host city's interest to capitalize on vast media exposure, the BOC and Rio municipal government have reconstructed, renovated, and rebranded Rio de Janeiro in order to impart a highly constructed image of the city and country to the world.

### **Favela Regeneration and Removal**

In an effort to stage the city for the Olympic Games, Rio has been pressured to develop the urban environment to meet the standards of the IOC. One of the biggest problems that impede with urbanization of the city is the favelas. The significant and controversial problem with the favelas is their aesthetic. Host cities are compelled to cope with visible problems by regenerating the urban landscape. Dealing with the visual issue of the favelas is part of the urban transformation process, which is part of Brazil's agreement with the IOC to portray the city by Olympic standards for the media. However, the beneficiaries of urban regeneration are not the residents—certainly not the urban poor—but the billions of global television viewers, international visitors, and investors (Steinbrink, 2013). Because the IOC requires that media coverage of the event portray Olympism in a specific, wholesome way, the host city has no choice but to find solutions to the visual shortcomings of the city. A major issue of urbanization of Rio in preparation for the Olympic Games is the mistreatment and exploitation of favela residents. In the process of urbanizing the landscape of Rio, citizens have been forcefully displaced from their homes. Other strategies to regenerate the favelas demean residents and interfere with their lives.

**Staging of the Olympic City.** There are two types of strategic intervention methods that the national government, state government, and Rio municipal government have

implemented in their strategy to deal with the problem of Rio's favelas: invisibilization and transformation.

**I. Invisibilization.** There are three invisibilization methods that Rio has taken on to hide the favelas from the audience of the Olympic Games: eviction and demolition, building walls, and visual media manipulation.

**(1) Eviction and demolition.** Over twenty thousand favela residents have been evicted from their homes, and many favela neighborhoods have been demolished so that land could be developed for the Olympic Games (Romero, 2012; Sánchez & Broudehoux, 2013; Freeman, 2014; Cuadros, 2016). Olympic planning creates what may be called a "state of exception," a period of time when "anything goes," when officials can say, "we have to do this for the Olympics; we have to get the city ready" (Williamson, 2015, 51:25). Rio has used the Olympic Games as an opportunity to bypass the democratic political process in the implementation of policy, procedures, restrictions, and controls to bring about widespread changes that serve investor interests over the people (Sánchez & Broudehoux, 2013). Most evicted favela residents have been forced to move to remote outskirts of the city, away from their neighborhoods, communities, jobs, and schools (Steinbrink 2013; Williamson, 2015; Cuadros, 2016). Many families ended up moving as far as thirty miles from the communities where they had previously been living (Cuadros, 2016). This invisibilization method seeks to hide not only the favelas but also its residents from media and the tourist eye.

**(2) Building walls.** Walls have been erected around favelas in Rio to serve as sight and sound barriers. Walls are built along main roads to keep visitors from seeing the favelas. Harris (2016a) describes that when people leave Rio's international airport and

head to the world famous South Zone of the city, where Ipanema and Copacabana beaches are, there is a wall along the road that keeps travelers from seeing the favela Complexo da Maré. The invisibilization approach of building walls was purported to be a measure of noise protection. The reality of this strategy is that it negatively impacts favela communities by acting as a barrier that further separates citizens from the rest of the city.

**(3) Visual media manipulation.** Manipulating Olympic visual media in order to keep the favelas out of the global perception is another method of hiding the favelas. Rio was careful not to show images of the favelas in any official promotional photos or videos for the Olympics. Media creators used camera angles that prevented the favelas from coming into view (Steinbrink, 2013). Another form of media manipulation is in mapping of the city. Favela neighborhoods are intentionally omitted on maps of Rio. Favela regions are shown as green spaces.

**II. Transformation.** Not all of the favelas can be removed or hidden. The second type of intervention includes urban policy strategies for improving the image of Rio's favelas. There are three steps to the favela transformation strategy: pacification, beautification, and touristic staging. It is important to note that pacification of favelas is the first step—the requirement for the next two steps of transformation.

**(1) Pacification.** The first step that Rio has taken in their effort to transform the favelas is pacification. The definition of the word *pacify* is to bring or restore peace, tranquility, quiet, or calm; however, this word can also mean to subdue or reduce to submission by force ("Pacify," 2017). Due to mega-events in Rio, the municipal government has set out to "improve the general security situation in Rio" (Steinbrink, 2013, p. 136). To do so, Rio's government has released teams of military police officers to occupy favela

neighborhoods and regulate criminal activity. The teams of officers are a part of the *Unidade de Policia Pacificadora*—Pacifying Police Unit (UPP) program, which was designed to drive out drug traffickers (Baroni, 2013; Davis, 2015; Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015; Cuadros, 2016). However, the military police intimidate residents and interfere with their everyday lives. Although the pacification strategy seeks to demonstrate Rio’s security for sporting mega-events, the program is considered to be a radical approach to the problem of drug trafficking because military occupation in residential areas puts innocent people in danger and breeds further distrust of the police and hostility toward the government (Phillips, 2007; Cuadros, 2016).

**(2) *Beautification.*** After pacification, the second step that Rio has taken in the effort to transform the favelas is aesthetic remodeling, also called beautification. Beautification measures were presented to the public as projects designed for bettering local living conditions; however, the true intention behind beautification is to change the appearance of the favelas to suggest that the neighborhoods are positive, happy, vibrant, and exotically Brazilian (Steinbrink, 2013). The most prominent beautification tactic that Rio has implemented is favela painting. The city hired artists to create favela façades in order to produce visual order, which authorities presumed would connect to the notion that tenement housing and people are civilized (as cited in Freeman, 2014). Using bright colors, hired artists and locals have painted favela homes in order to appease the tourist’s gaze.

**(3) *Touristic staging.*** The third step that Rio has taken in the effort to transform the favelas is touristic staging. Despite invisibilization tactics to hide the favelas from tourists and media, Rio has taken an opposite approach with certain neighborhoods by allowing guided tours of the favelas. Slum tourism is only offered in areas that have been



pacified and beautified. Aside from exploiting and intruding on the lives of the local people, selective directing of the tourist's gaze diverts the attention of visitors and media from the numerous favelas where residents have been affected by eviction, demolition, and wall building.

### **Media Framing**

Media framing is an important theoretical framework to consider in this assessment of media portrayals of the favelas. Media framing suggests that the media industry acts as a gatekeeper of information with the power to shape audience perceptions of issues and events by constructing frames around stories. Frames produced by media organize discourse by telling the public what is relevant and irrelevant (Ryan, Carragee & Meinhofer, 2001). Media framing leave lasting impressions on audiences' ways of thinking about social topics. There are three primary functions of media framing according to Gitlin (1980): selection, emphasis, and exclusion. Knowing that the IOC and BOC are concerned with the portrayal of the Rio Olympics, the selection, emphasis, and exclusion functions of media framing are applied to official media coverage of Rio 2016.

NBCUniversal holds broadcast rights for official coverage of the Olympic Games in the United States. NBC's vice president is a sitting member of the IOC and is part of the Radio and Television Commission that has oversight over broadcasters covering the Games (Berkes, 2012). There are several actors and interests that influence the creation of media frames, including political and corporate elites, economic and cultural resources, and social movements (Ryan, Carragee & Meinhofer, 2001). The IOC has constructed a frame for media coverage that dictates precisely what the global audience knows and sees of the Games. Gitlin's (1980) three primary functions of media framing—selection, emphasis, and

exclusion—can be applied to network announcing in Olympic broadcasts as “NBC makes overt choices on what to show, what to habitually show, and what to avoid” (Billings et al., 2008, p. 216). There were some instances during the Olympics in which NBC coverage showed or reported on the favelas, which must be considered with respect to media framing in the interests of the IOC.

**Official Olympics media and the favelas.** At the start of the Olympics, the favelas were depicted in the opening ceremony. Recognizing the favelas in the official Olympic narrative of Brazil was a deeply meaningful decision considering the long-neglected population (Cuadros, 2016). However, in alignment with urbanization policies to hide and control images of the favelas, in the opening ceremony the favelas were portrayed in a distinct, constructed way. The ceremony began with a “harmonious version of Brazil’s history, celebrating the intermixing that has produced its beautifully diverse population” (Cuadros, 2016, para. 1). The story narrows from Brazil to Rio de Janeiro and shows how the landscape developed into a metropolis over time. Actors ran across the stadium floor, jumping building to building as the city appears, until reaching the favelas, which seem to pop up from a corner of darkness. The favelas materialize in bright lights and colors as dancers perform *passinho*<sup>6</sup> on rooftops to *baile funk*<sup>7</sup> (see *Figure 3*). Like methods of beautification and tourist staging, the favelas in the opening ceremony exemplify an attempt to control images of the favelas by presenting them in a simplified way that is easy for foreigners to interpret.

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<sup>6</sup> Passinho, which translates as “little step,” is a dance style that emerged from the favelas or Rio de Janeiro that combines elements of pop, funk, and break-dancing with traditional Brazilian styles such as samba (Cronin, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Funk carioca is a type of dance music from Rio de Janeiro that is derived from hip-hop and African style music.



Figure 3. The favela depicted in the opening ceremony of the Olympics (Schmidt, 2016). Retrieved from [goo.gl/FaVDyw](http://goo.gl/FaVDyw)

The Olympics ceremony did not reference the historic tensions between the favelas and the state. The ceremony's director, Fernando Meirelles, who is best known for his film *City of God* said, "the Olympic ceremonies aren't the place to air a country's dirty laundry" (Cuadros, 2016, para. 6). Many favelados were pleased to see the favelas in the opening ceremony because they are the "soul of Rio," but felt that the show created "a dream favela, a fiction" (Cuadros, 2016, para. 10). The favela in the opening ceremony is an example of the selection and emphasis functions of media framing.

During the Olympics, NBC's television morning talk show, *The Today Show*, aired a news piece in which Matt Lauer, one of the show's hosts, visits a favela. Lauer prefaces the story by saying, "The favelas have become synonymous with poverty and crime, but that is

not the full story... life on the margins can be both challenging and colorful” (Nash, 2015, 0:29). The television journalist walks through Santa Marta, the first favela in Rio to undergo pacification, with urban planner Theresa Williamson. A military police unit escorted Lauer and Williamson through the favela, which deterred residents from interacting with them during their filming of the news piece. When asked if residents envy the “modern” Rio and if folks would rather live in the formal city than in the favelas, Williamson responded:

Not necessarily. People are born and raised in these communities—for generations. They [favelas] are very culturally vibrant. They don’t see the same sense of community in those neighborhoods. This is where they can create their lives. This is where they have control over their outcomes. Often there is a cultural element where they don’t even image what it would be like to live there, and the people there can’t even image what it would be like to live here. They’re right next to each other, but they’re worlds apart. (Nash, 2016, 4:17)

Later during the Games, NBC Nightly News composed a news segment called “Beyond the Games” about Rio’s favelas. NBC correspondent Miguel Almaguer calls Rio “A Tale of Two Cities—one on display while the other sits in the shadows” (Frank, 2016, 2:26). Further, Almaguer says “Rio’s notorious favelas are strongholds for gangs and drug runners. With security, we traveled into one of the favelas considered safe enough to enter, Santa Marta... home to extreme poverty and violence” (Frank, 2016, 0:40).

Dissatisfaction with mainstream and popular media has led favela residents and NGOs to create platforms for citizens’ media, so that people have the opportunity to gain control over their stories. Rather than nonresidents interpreting life in the favelas,

particularly in the face of Olympic planning, citizens within periphery communities have the ability to speak for themselves through community-based journalism.

### **Citizens' Media**

According to Pino (1997), despite the efforts of social scientists to recount the social history of the favelas, their stories remain largely untold in full scope. These dense neighborhoods are only comprehensible to insiders (Freeman, 2014). Citizens are using ICTs and the Internet to share their own narratives. By doing so, Rio locals have engaged in citizens' media. To understand the term citizens' media, the concept of citizenship must be broken down. Mouffe (1992) says citizenship refers to not simply legal status but also active participation in everyday political practices and actions that reshape individual identities, the identities of others, and the social environment. Therefore, citizens engage in the construction of their identities and social space. Using this definition of citizenship, Rodriguez (2001) identifies three fundamental characteristics of citizens' media:

'Citizens' media' implies first that a collectivity is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities, and institutionalized social relations; and third, that these communications practices are empowering the community involved. (p. 20)

Citizens' media is a method of contesting erroneous dominant media by producing journalism that better represents marginalized peoples. Mitra (2001) argues that the Internet has "open-ended potential in providing an expressive space," and common people can "take on the position of the speaking agent to produce a specific voice for him or herself" (p. 493). Due to decades of ostracism in urban society, misrepresentation in media,

and Olympics-related planning and mistreatment, the people of the favelas have created media of their own.

**Accessing ICTs and the Internet.** An integral part of producing citizens' media is gaining access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the Internet. Although there is great potential for Web 2.0 technologies to empower marginalized populations and individuals, digital inequality cannot be overlooked in the process of gathering information and designing and publishing media.

In 2007, when the announcement was made that Rio would host the 2014 World Cup, favela residents had just begun to obtain computers, cell phones, and Internet connection (Gordon, 2017). In these urban spaces, where traditionally residents have had to find makeshift solutions and creative alternatives to the lack of basic public services and resources, acquiring access to the Internet is yet another pursuit for favela residents.

In favelas all over Brazil, LAN houses and telecenters have become popular places for citizens to use computers and the Internet (Nemer & Reed, 2013). These establishments are community technology centers (CTCs). The acronym 'LAN' stands for local area network, and the term 'LAN house' is used directly in Portuguese without translation (Nemer & Reed, 2013, p. 3). LAN houses are for-profit computer labs, like cybercafés, where people can pay to use computers and the Internet; whereas telecenters are facilities supported by the state and NGOs where people can use computers and the Internet at no charge (Nemer & Reed, 2013). In some CTCs, ICT training is offered. Many favela residents use the technologies and services available at CTCs. However, still, users have to comply with the costs, hours, and policies of CTCs, such as R\$3.00 per hour (approximately USD \$1.00) in LAN houses and 1 hour per day in telecenters (Nemer, 2016a).

Digital inequalities are far from being resolved since disparities stem from “deep, complex social, economic, and political factors; however, slowly and unevenly, computers and the Internet are becoming more accessible in marginalized places, such as favelas,” which has allowed favela residents to take advantage of media platforms (Nemer, 2016b, para. 58).

**Rio Olympics Neighborhood Watch.** Catalytic Communities (CatComm) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded by Theresa Williamson in 2000. The mission of the organization is to empower residents in informal settlements by providing support in the areas of sustainable community development, human rights, and communications. In May 2010, Catalytic Communities launched Rio Olympics Neighborhood Watch (RioOnWatch), a Rio de Janeiro-based, non-profit, grassroots, citizens’ media site dedicated to bringing visibility to favela community voices amidst the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. The RioOnWatch website states:

This news site is our primary vehicle for publishing the perspectives of community organizers, residents, and international observers, in light of the fast-paced urban transformations that currently characterize Rio. The RioOnWatch program works to grow the participation of community journalists in reporting on Rio’s transformations. The program also dialogues with the mainstream and alternative press to engender a more accurate picture of favelas, their contributions to the city, and resident perspectives.

Through citizens’ media, RioOnWatch.org, a community-based media collective, aims to “change mainstream ideas about favelas and their inhabitants by shifting the focus from poverty, violence, and criminality to images of the ordinary life”—“to positively present the

name ‘favela’” (Baroni, 2011, p. 49). Previous research has examined photojournalism of Viva Favela, which is a collaborative news site for residents from low-income communities across Brazil. Baroni (2011) says Viva Favela gave people an opportunity to “be the protagonists of their own stories, which up to then, had rarely if ever been told by the mainstream media” (p. 52). Not only does RioOnWatch.org circulate citizens’ perspectives to favela onlookers, it also serves as a hyper-local news channel for favela residents.

### **Research Questions**

A review of citizens’ media may help to establish a clearer, more authentic understanding of the diverse realities of favela residents as well as the topics and issues that are important to these communities. This research provides an in-depth analysis of citizen journalism and narratives from Rio’s favelas surrounding Olympic processes. The proposed research questions are:

**RQ1:** How do favela residents portray their lives and communities in the favelas via citizens’ media?

**RQ2:** How does citizens’ media tell a counter narrative to mainstream media?



## CHAPTER 3. METHODS

In order to examine the citizens' media emerging from Rio's favelas, a thematic analysis of stories from the Community Contributors section of RioOnWatch.org will be conducted. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that aims to analyze "narrative materials of life stories" (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013, p. 399). This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data that reflect experiences, meanings, and realities of those being studied (Braun & Clark, 2006). According to Braun and Clark (2006), themes are noticeably prevalent ideas that "capture something important about the data in relation to the research question" (p. 82). Thematic analysis is a suitable method for answering the research questions, which are designed to determine common themes, therefore meaningful topics, within citizens' news stories from Rio's urban periphery.

### Sample

The data sample consists of 145 stories, written by 91 unique citizen journalists, which are publicly available within the Community Contributors section of the site. Although individual authors do not disclose whether they are professional journalists or not, RioOnWatch contributors are all residents of the favelas. Stories may be written by residents with professional training or non-professionals. Content of stories consists of text, photographs, and some videos (see *Figure 4*). The stories were previously translated from Brazilian Portuguese to English by RioOnWatch editors; both are viewable on the site. The data set includes citizens' stories spanning from May 2010 through October 2016. The timeframe of the sample is of interest because events reflect occurrences before, during,

and after the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Units of analysis are the text of each individual story.

# Olympic Projects and Destruction: Ramos Left Without Public Spaces, Sidewalks, Trees and More

**"The area was treated like a thoroughfare between the airport and Barra"**

## The Mayor has no clothes

As if based on Hans Christian Andersen's classic story, Mayor Eduardo Paes and the City government make announcements of things that no one is able to see:

*"I can say that this project is a sort of declaration of love to Rio de Janeiro. Its suburbs went through more than 49 years of high-level neglect. When we deliver the TransCarioca, we aren't just talking about mobility, but also the restoration of Rio's suburban neighborhoods, which are the soul of the city. The BRT will allow Rio to rediscover its true identity."*

Paes emphasized that the implementation would be gradual and would bring benefits to the local population. "A degraded, inaccessible area of the city was transformed into a place where mobility is totally facilitated. It wasn't just installing BRT stations. It was installing sewers, paving sidewalks, creating squares and recreational areas," he said.

*"With a span of 39km and 47 stations, the TransCarioca passes through 27 neighborhoods that gained, as a consequence of the project, a true transformation. New sidewalks and paving, restructured drainage systems, improvements in lighting, pedestrian bridges and new stoplights were some of the changes in neighborhoods like Vicente de Carvalho, Vaz Lobo, Madureira, Campinho, Jacarepaguá, Penha and Ramos" - Olympic City website*

But the declarations on the street, everyone can see:



"Some have comfort, others have the BRT," says a message on Rua Emílio Zakuar, where people have to walk in the street or in the BRT lanes for lack of sidewalks.

Hugo Costa is 41 years old. He is a graduate in Geography of the Fluminense Federal University (UFF), an aspiring blogger and a resident of the Ramos neighborhood.

Share on:



- BRT
- environment
- government neglect
- heat island
- infrastructure
- legacy
- Legacy myth
- Leopoldina
- Mayor Eduardo Paes
- Misplaced public priorities
- North Zone
- Olympics
- public space
- public transportation
- Ramos
- Transcarioca
- transportation
- upgrading

*This article was written by Hugo Costa, and published on July 22, 2016.  
Translation provided by Christopher Owens, in #Rio2016, \*Highlight, by Community Contributors, Sustainability, Transit, Understanding Rio, Violations*

Figure 4. An example of a citizens' news story. Content has been reduced to illustrate main features of the RioOnWatch citizens' media story format.

## Data Preparation and Analysis

Data will be gathered and analyzed using the six phases of performing a thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clark (2006) (see *Figure 5*). The stories will be downloaded as PDF files, which will be read and reread while noting initial ideas in the first phase. The second phase involves generating initial codes across the data set. The third phase entails identifying potential themes from the codes. The fourth and fifth phases require checking, defining, and naming themes. Finally, the six phase involves relating apparent themes to the research questions and extracting direct quotes from the data set.

### Analysis phases and their descriptions

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#### Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87)

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##### *Familiarising with data*

Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.

##### *Generating initial codes*

Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.

##### *Searching for themes*

Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

##### *Reviewing themes*

Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map.

##### *Defining and naming themes*

Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

##### *Producing the report*

The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

*Figure 5.* Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **Data Collection**

To collect data on this media phenomenon, I analyzed the data set in six phases. In phase 1, I reviewed the data set by reading the citizens' stories from the Community Contributors section of RioOnWatch.org. After highlighting, noting, and annotating around major topics, I familiarized myself with some of the current issues being discussed in favela communities. In phase 2, I generated a list of reoccurring ideas from the citizens' media. Many ideas came about repeatedly, which I identified as codes within the journalism. Existing tags prompted by community journalists and editors served as a guide for codes. In phase 3, I constructed categories for the codes, which are considered major themes in the citizens' media. By sorting related ideas into larger themes, I revised the themes and codes in phase 4. In phase 5, I defined these themes by referring to academic literature, public discourse, and citizens' media. To illustrate the prominence of these themes within the data set, I extracted direct quotes from the citizens' accounts and discuss their relevance to the research questions in phase 6.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Citizens' media on RioOnWatch.org are comprised of resident experiences, viewpoints, and opinions. A number of the citizens' stories are related to Olympic planning of the IOC, BOC, federal government, state government, and Rio municipal government; however, the collection of stories reflect a deeper thread of historic human rights violations in Brazil and Rio's favelas. Although the stories depict various experiences and concerns of individuals within the urban periphery, themes throughout the data set are interconnected from a larger standpoint that reaches beyond recent Olympic processes into the history of Rio and its systematic marginalization of the favela population.

Major themes that emerged from citizens' media in Rio de Janeiro between 2010 and 2016 are: portrayals of the favelas in media, concerns regarding public policies and political processes, discontent with urban violence and the UPP program, expressions of culture, and the impact of the Olympic Games.

### **I. Portrayals of the Favelas in Media**

A major theme discussed in citizens' media is media coverage of the favelas. Residents widely oppose mainstream media and call for alternative media because of longstanding biases and reoccurring misrepresentation in dominant media. In response, residents have taken up their own media production practices.

**Critiques of mainstream media.** Because of the divide between the formal and the informal parts of the city (see *Figure 6*), community journalists from the favelas explicitly state that having their own media outlets is imperative. Residents reject mainstream media, which does not appropriately cover events and issues from the favelas, resulting in stigmatization, marginalization, stereotypes, and prejudices in larger society. Community

media creators warn that mainstream media tend to criminalize poverty, emphasize violence, and ignore major occurrences such as social injustices or human rights violations. Also, citizens from these low socio-economic boroughs deny that conventional news sources inform their public. Relating to Williamson’s statement that there is a cultural element in which people of the asphalt and people of the hill cannot comprehend each other’s lives, mainstream media sources craft illusions about what life in the favelas is like—often degrading the lifestyles and people that live in favela communities. In citizens’ media, residents critique mainstream media.



*Figure 6.* The socio-spatial divide between the formal and the informal areas of Rio de Janeiro (Ohrem-Leclef, 2015). Retrieved from [goo.gl/95J5vG](https://goo.gl/95J5vG)

Thamyra Thâmara, journalist, photographer, founder of the media collective, *GatoMÍDIA*, and resident of Complexo do Alemão, says that favelas are relentlessly portrayed as impoverished and violent by the mainstream media. Thâmara declares, “The hegemonic media has not contributed to the role of informing the public but has been criminalizing minorities for years” (Article 49). Daiene Mendes, a fellow resident of Complexo do Alemão illustrates:

For a long time favelas were adrift from the debates at the heart of this city—thought of as marginal and wrapped up in violence and poverty. Their residents forever carried with them the weight of a stigma related to living in a certain part of the city. Stigmatizing favelas can cause serious damage. The media does this every day by reporting only on how dangerous certain areas can be and creating an atmosphere of fear. (Article 11)

One of the most prominent media collectives from Rio’s favelas is *Coletivo Papo Reto*—a hyper-local news source, from Complexo do Alemão. The collective’s angle is “We by Us”—an exchange of information, by the people and for the people of the favelas. *Coletivo Papo Reto* states in their mission that big, corporate media criminalizes favela communities and residents rather than serving the people. In an impassioned news article, well-known activist, Raull Santiago, an organizer of *Coletivo Papo Reto* writes:

In the mainstream media, 99% of what we see or hear about is violence. But what is behind all of this? It’s obvious! Prejudices, stereotypes, racism, conjectures, and people not wanting to actually get to know first-hand the people and places being discussed. The violence exists and must be exposed. It is real and it is present. But



we must move beyond this topic, because it is not the only one that exists in the favela. When we focus solely on this issue, it perpetuates itself. (Article 44)

Frustration with the mainstream media's emphasis on violence, Santiago goes on to say, "little to nothing gets reported when a cultural activity takes place, except in the independent media" (Article 44).

In a publication titled "What the Mainstream Media Gets Wrong When Covering Favelas," Thainã de Medeiros, an activist from the Penha favela complex and a member of *Coletivo Papo Reto* avouches, "when the mainstream media tries to write about us, they always screw up" (Article 40). Medeiros discloses specific experiences in which he witnessed events that were later perverted by mainstream media. In many cases, situations are lied about or scenarios are completely fabricated, commonly placing favela residents as perpetrators. After giving detailed examples of instances that have been mistreated by the media, Medeiros composes a list of negative patterns in mainstream media, which includes, "They're silent on the genocide of Black people" (Article 40).

In support of Medeiros's claim, Jailson de Souza e Silva, founder of *Observatório de Favelas*—an NGO dedicated to research, consultancy, and policy—expresses frustration with mainstream media in their coverage of deaths of favela residents. Souza e Silva argues that mainstream media demonize and dehumanize favela residents in order to delineate them as the "other." To expose the matter Souza e Silva says:

This issue has become so commonplace that it does not gain space on the front pages, nor is it featured on the inside pages. To further support the demonization hypothesis is the lack of identification of those who've died. We do not know their faces, their ages, their names, their profiles, their stories, their habits... all the things

the media likes to publish when someone considered to have the right to life dies.

(Article 23)

In mainstream media, not only are favela residents subjected to stereotypes and generalizations; worse, citizens are marginalized to the extent that they are sometimes entirely ignored even in cases of death.

In an opinion piece about the role of mass communications and the importance of media literacy, community journalist Juliana Portella says:

Those who think the press only covers the facts are deceiving themselves. We should always reflect on the role of the media. It is important to analyze in what form journalism is conceived and the ideological horizon it represents. It is also very important to reflect on ways in which media is produced. The intention of forming public opinion is one of the most marked objectives of communication. Phrases are repeated; not all sides of the story are visible; framing words and statements make the discussion lose its neutrality. (Article 27)

Media creators from the favelas widely share the view that the mainstream media is not neutral, factual, or even informative but rather upsettingly biased and antagonistic.

Mainstream media frame stories so that favelas are rendered as unsavory, undesirable places. As media of all kinds are increasingly prevalent in our social world, the issue of misrepresentation is critical.

**Call for alternative media.** As favela residents have gained access to ICTs and the Internet, different forms of citizens' media are being generated. Community communicators of the urban periphery, such as journalists, reporters, photographers, editors, broadcasters, and artists, reach their fellow community members via social media,

news portals, news collectives, printed newspapers, radio stations, podcasts, popular courses, and other communicative forms. Michel Silva comments, “The content of community media is an important instrument of local documentation. Residents become aware of works, social projects, and stories” (Article 35).

Aside from being a source of information and news for favela residents, community journalists from Rio’s urban periphery affirm that democratization of media is a crucial element of a functioning democracy. Thaís Cavalcante, a community journalist from Complexo da Maré insists that the fight for the democratization of media is due to the traditional media having their own agendas, “making effective democracy difficult and increasing the need to produce alternative media” (Article 35). The independent media maintain that having a free press is essential to freedom of expression and that citizens have a right to consume, produce, and share information as forms of political participation. Pinpointing the role of community journalists Cavalcante avows:

With the countless violations of rights that happen in our favelas, our job as community journalists is to intervene, question, and denounce. The goal of publicly communicating situations is to deconstruct stereotypes, give voice to community residents and present a viewpoint from the inside to those who don’t know. (Article 48)

Santiago describes the work of *Coletivo Papo Reto* and the collective’s purpose of communicating and exposing “through our own lived experiences...various violations of rights, which are always present” and showing “the positive side, which is a form of resistance” (Article 44).

The collective, *GatoMÍDIA*, hosts a training program that gives tips to residents on how to utilize mobile devices and social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram in order to document occurrences and increase visibility. Thâmara said in an interview that she believes communication collectives in Rio are “gaining a legitimate space inside and outside the favela” and “the favela newspaper will show another version of a story that the mainstream media publishes—a need and obligation to tell the resident’s version” (Article 49). Furthermore, digital education programs are being integrated into favela communities to combat inequality in digital literacy. Cavalcante mentions a few initiatives that offer ICT courses and technological education opportunities, such as Nave do Conhecimento and Casa Rio Digital (Article 61).

The global media that came along with hosting the Olympics has validated the media creators from the favelas. Community journalists feel vindicated in their production of citizens’ media as the international press has scrutinized Brazilian mainstream media sources for their practices. Cleber Araújo Santos, a resident from Complexo do Alemão and curator of favela news on social media, explains that the international press has exposed the Brazilian media as being unreliable and alternative media has provided another source of information in favela households. Santos reflects on changes in Rio’s mediasphere:

The international press has exposed how the Brazilian media manipulate politics... Every day we watch the growing desperation of TV anchors, editors and journalists, who attempt to manipulate us with their partisan messages. With the Internet things have seriously changed. Most people now have access to other sources. Foreign correspondents are here, simply observing, and showing the world that things are not as the Brazilian press would like to portray them. Alternative media

are out there, telling it like it is and becoming reliable news sources. Many others are producing general interest stories, and many reports are now visiting places they never had before—places the Brazilian media never goes. The poor have a voice and access to more information and they are also producing their own.

(Article 22)

Explanations within the data stress three positive outcomes of citizens' media. First, citizens' media bestows a more truthful portrait of the favelas on the general public. Second, news pieces contain useful, practical, informative material for favela residents about their localities. Third, the international press that arrived in Rio alongside Olympic planning has justified and supported citizens in their production of independent media after uncovering that the Brazilian mainstream media is oftentimes unprincipled.

Cavalcante highlights the need for citizens' media throughout Olympic processes:

In this Olympic year in Rio de Janeiro, the alternative media is already alert for events involving favelas, spaces of greater concern to the authorities, as well as traditional vehicles that are increasingly seeking residents to give their opinions on promises and projects. The Olympic spirit has not arrived. But the need to communicate in our own words what really happens remains year after year.

(Article 35)

Residents make evident their dissatisfaction with the mainstream media and its portrayal of the favelas, which has galvanized residents to engage in citizens' media as a form of resistance. Within the data set, critiques of mainstream media and the call for alternative media quite candidly address RQ1 and RQ2. Using citizens' media favela residents share aspects of their communities that the mainstream media ignores such as

cultural events and deaths of community members. These types of narratives counter mainstream media by chronicling what dominant media does not report.

***Censorship.*** The main challenge that community media creators encounter is censorship. In their effort to document the lives and experiences of residents, journalists are sometimes interrupted by authority figures who suppress *sousveillance*. Although Brazil has a supposed free press, after 21 years of military dictatorship, censorship has carried over into Brazil's democracy. When democracy was established, the Brazilian media assumed a new role as a tool for public utility. However, Brazilian media outlets are controlled by media owners who are powerful, political figures in society. Cavalcante shares her experience of writing about human rights:

We felt limited in our ability to report and photograph what was happening, whether with respect to the army or an everyday cultural event. I've been shouted at by military officers. As a journalist I have always been careful about what I do when I'm near them, but often I have had to identify myself, the newspaper, show them my website, my name and so on. (Article 47)

The work of community reporting is somewhat risky for journalists who face censorship in occupied favelas. Cell phones are tools used to discreetly capture incidents when police officers violate civil and human rights. However, still, residents and journalists deal with measures of restriction, control, and punishment. Gizele Martins from Complexo da Maré reports:

Carlos Cout, photographer for *Coletivo Papo Reto*, was arrested for contempt, resisting arrest, and not letting UPP officers look at his cell phone. Even upon showing identification he was driven to the police station. When he arrived there,

they saw several links and repercussions [from that day's actions] and he was given the 'opportunity' to 'let it go.' Carlos did not 'let it go' and proceeded with the complaint. This is another rights violation aimed at community media. (Article 47)

Authorities such as the military police attempt to keep journalist from exposing their conduct within favela communities through threats, bribery, and intimidation. An unnamed journalist depicts a run-in with a police officer:

I witnessed a police officer approach a citizen who was driving by in his car listening to loud funk music. The UPP officer accosted the citizen by pointing his rifle at him and demanding that he stop. I filmed the confrontation from across the street. The policeman saw me and told me I could not film them and that he would take me to the police station. (Article 47)

Although censorship is the reality of community-based media creators from Rio's favelas, journalists are hopeful about the future of media in Rio. Despite censorship by authorities, through ICTs, Web 2.0, and media collectives, Rio's favela population is countering mainstream media with citizens' media. Mijuca Salinas reinforces:

Now we launch a new era in our popular media. We are no longer bound by social media that censors the actions or words of the vulnerable. [Independent media] has opened possibilities for us to directly and publicly communicate with frankness and security without being censored. (Article 45)

Concerning RQ1, favela residents transcribe, for the public, both positive and negative occasions in the favelas. Presumably, the most emboldening facet of citizens' media is the ability of average citizens to unveil the cruelties and abuses of police. Related to RQ2,

citizens' media not only counter mainstream media but also protest corruptive practices of media and other powerful actors such as the police.

**Positive legacy.** After the Olympics, Catalytic Communities, the NGO that launched the RioOnWatch program and news site, prepared a research report on media coverage of the Rio's favelas in major global news sources during the Olympics. By reviewing over 1,000 articles that contain the word "favela," researchers examined the language used, perspectives shared, topics addressed, and imagery accompanying media about favelas. Catalytic Communities found that more recent coverage of the favelas has depicted less violence and drugs and instead emphasized the strong sense of community, resident activists, and social movements in the favelas. This shift in coverage may be due to the rise of citizens' media. Overall, there seems to be more diverse coverage of favela communities in mainstream media, while many have deemed citizen journalism to be the positive legacy of the Rio Olympics.

## **II. Concerns Regarding Public Policies and Political Processes**

A major theme presented in citizens' media is concerns regarding public policies and political processes. A large number of issues are presented under this theme, such as human rights violations, misplaced public priorities, and democratic elections. Citizens report on each of these issues through personal reflections and journalistic investigations.

**Insufficient public services.** Under the umbrella of public policy concerns, a consistent argument presented in citizens' media is that the city of Rio has misplaced public priorities. By this, citizens contend that the government chooses not to implement or improve services, resources, and infrastructure for the public, but instead, the city concentrates its efforts and funds on mega-event planning, investing, and branding. Public



services may be understood as a government's provision of basic services such as healthcare, education, sanitation, security, and criminal justice, all which underpin human welfare. According to Ringold et al. (2013), the delivery of public services should be responsive to citizens' needs, particularly the needs of the most vulnerable, to enable better use of public revenue. Public services and resources are vital to the overall well-being of communities and populations within a government's jurisdiction. Favela residents specify the three top priorities of their communities: healthcare, sanitation, and education.

**Public health.** Although advancing public health should be a key objective of the Rio municipal government, public health measures are insubstantial in Rio, particularly in the favelas. Residents of the favelas ordinarily cope with inadequate or inaccessible public health services. Those who live in Rio's favelas generally do not have healthcare services available to them. In some favelas there are medical clinics; however, clinics are overcrowded, understaffed, and in need of supplies. Walmyr Júnior, resident of the Maré favela complex proclaims, "Public health is in chaos. There are not enough doctors, not enough medications, not enough hospital beds, not enough hospitals" (Article 16). Journalists Debora Pio and Isabele Aguiar collaborated on a news article that disclosed some of the public health issues in Vila Kennedy favela:

Consensus among residents is that public services are inadequate. We have no hospital. The healthcare facilities are limited to a health post and an Emergency Health Unit. In the last election, Mayor Eduardo Paes announced the construction of a Family Clinic, with even a site staked out. But since the project didn't come about, the site turned into a garbage dump. (Article 94)

In addition to meager healthcare, favelas lack other public health and sanitation services such as networked water systems, sewage disposal, and garbage collection. Community leader William de Oliveira assures, “The big issue is not the lack of water. The problem is one of distribution. It’s to do with the equipment that brings the water to the community” (Article 79). Journalist Eliano Félix reports on water in a neighborhood in Maré:

In the Mac Laren community there is no provision of water, sewage, or electricity. Residents’ sole source of water comes from one single pipe. This water is used for drinking, bathing, washing clothes and dishes, however it’s not guaranteed to be drinkable. (Article 92)

Vila Capão, a neighborhood in Complexo do Alemão, exemplifies how perilous poor sanitation conditions can be in some favelas. Community journalist, Demerson Couto, describes the area as having “open air sewage, mountains of trash, and construction debris accumulating for the past two years” (Article 91). Residents have nowhere to dispose of their trash, and because there is no waste collecting service, people resort to burning their garbage.

In the favelas, where public services are already minimal, there was a discontinuation of resources because of Olympic planning. Seven months before the Olympic Games, interim governor of Rio de Janeiro, Francisco Dornelles, declared a “state of calamity” because the state’s government did not have funds to finance the Olympics. Júnior responds:

We all know that in practice, this grants him the right to cut ‘essential public services’ for the Olympic Games to take place. This right to ‘cut’ has always been the

political practice in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. It puts at risk all the interests of the population to benefit a minority that will profit from the Games. The provision of essential public services has been shoved under the carpet so that no one can see. They've shoved away basic sanitation, which the majority of Rio's favelas do not have. This measure undermines water and electricity...it puts at risk the educational project for expanding public schools. (Article 16)

In February 2017, a law to privatize the State Water and Sewage Utility was approved, meaning that the fight for water and sewage in the favelas will continue with new challenges. Many are worried that private companies will charge high prices that could make water even more difficult to obtain. Residents' associations from favelas all over the city push for public health improvements and argue that integrating the favela into the formal city means providing basic services such as healthcare, fresh water, sewage systems, and waste management. With regard RQ1, citizens' use independent media to dialogue about their hardships and outline their most essential needs.

**Education.** The right to education is guaranteed by Brazil's Constitution. However, there is a striking difference between public education in the formal and informal parts of Rio. Children who live in poor neighborhoods of the city attend schools with fewer resources than children who live in affluent neighborhoods (Jeanniton, 2016).

Furthermore, due to the pacification program, schools in the periphery are routinely invaded by military police. Artur Voltolini gives an example of how educational rights ensured by the Constitution are systematically violated by the state in favela communities:

In one case, armed police officers scaled the walls of the CIEP (a state-run public school) during school hours to search the premises. Without presenting any

authorization whatsoever or identifying themselves, and terrifying students and staff, they used the justification that all they required to enter the school without a warrant was one report of suspicious activity; and that in any case, these children were used to weapons. The students and teachers had to stay lined up in the hall while the officers searched for the alleged weapons and drugs. Nothing was found. But the school remained closed for the following four days. (Article 103)

Susana Sá Gutierrez, an art teacher at CIEP says:

Children's fear gets in the way of their learning. They are agitated in the classroom, demonstrate difficulty concentrating, and can spend an entire class period talking about the violence they've experienced. How can I teach somebody whose father was shot by the police? On the Thursday following the violent police operation that left ten people dead in Maré everyone was very upset. They insisted on spending the entire time talking about what had happened that morning—the beatings, the shots, knives in the throat. School should be a place of education, not of repression. (Article 103)

Due to limited resources, overcrowding, lack of investment, and invasive police operations schools in the favelas make education even more rigorous for students.

Although invoking affirmative action in recent years has helped students from favela communities reach higher education, the likelihood of progressing through Rio's public school system and attending university is slim. From the Department of Education at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Dr. Carmen Teresa Gabriel explains the difficulties of enrolling in educational institutions for youth from the favelas:

The road to university presents itself as a semi-impossible path. There is an urgent need for students to get their first job. There is an unspoken yet internalized understanding that ‘university is not for you.’ For the middle class, transition from school to college comes naturally. For students coming from the city’s outskirts and working class suburbs, the port of entry is more like a wooden staircase without steps. (Article 129)

Although public education is made available, education is not entirely feasible for all citizens. Because of Olympic investments, education has been underfunded. Amanda Wolf, resident of Campo Grande says, “These works are unnecessary expenditures. They should invest in education, health, safety in the streets, and public transit.” (Article 88). Because quality public services are lacking, favela residents are generally unsupportive of Rio’s mega-event agenda. Cariocas—not just from the favelas but from all parts of the city—would prefer to see funds spent on improving public health, education, transportation, and security. Again, acknowledging RQ1, favela residents use alternative media to consult about the fundamental needs of their communities.

**Housing issues.** The Olympics has brought on housing issues for favela residents who regularly experience inequalities in housing availability and affordability. Major housing issues addressed in citizens’ media are evictions and gentrification, both which push residents out of their homes.

**Evictions.** In the time leading up to the 2016 Summer Olympics, one of the biggest problems in Rio was forced evictions. The BOC and Rio municipal government argued that Olympics infrastructure required the demolition of entire neighborhoods; however, favela residents saw Olympic building and thus eviction processes as an opportunity for the city

to rid of unwanted housing and communities. In favelas throughout the city, residents received eviction notices demanding that families leave their homes. In many cases, hillsides with favela housing were deemed areas of risk by officials despite the lack of evidence that indeed houses were situated in dangerous places. As compensation, homeowners were offered public housing in apartment buildings in the formal city. Favela residents resisted evictions but were relentlessly pressured by the city to move. Many were given no choice but to leave their homes, communities, and memories behind.

The oldest favela in Rio is Morro da Providência. In Providência, as in many other favelas, there is a tradition of passing homes down from generation to generation. Although this custom has existed for decades, Olympic planning has disrupted the practices of families in the community. Before the Olympics, appraisers assessed an area of houses along a staircase in Providência and determined the structures to be potentially vulnerable to natural disasters. Homes located along the flight of steps, which is somewhat of a landmark in the community, were tagged with spray paint by the *Secretaria Municipal de Habitação*—the Municipal Housing Secretary (SMH)—indicating the city’s plan for their demolition. Citizens were not informed of their rights in any way and unexpectedly discovered the spray paint on their homes without any explanation from the city of what was going to happen. Ana Maria Ferreira, stay-at-home mother of six children and resident of the community for over twenty years, expressed feelings of sadness that she would have to leave her neighbors and friends because of the eviction. Ferreira said, “It is a real nightmare. An inexplicable pain having to abandon the place where I grew up and raised my children” (Article 136). Another community member, Luís Cláudio Monte ranted, “I will not leave here! I really won’t! They gave us no explanation. No one came to talk with us.

They are taking what is ours” (Article 136). A majority of residents affected by this eviction procedure rallied in anger; however some were unbothered, indifferent, or content with the option of relocation and compensation.

One of the most controversial forced evictions was that of the favela Vila Autódromo. The community was established in the mid-1960s when fisherman settled along the Jacarepaguá Lagoon for the opportunity to make a living. Residents were granted deeds for their homes by former governors, meaning they acquired legitimate, legal status. At various different points throughout the history of the community, Vila Autódromo has been threatened by governmental decree. For example, during the 1992 Earth Summit, the land was called an area of “environmental interest,” and the city pressured residents to desert their homes. In preparation for the 2007 Pan-American Games, the city alleged similar claims. Expectedly so, the land again became of interest to the city during Olympic planning. An outspoken leader of the eviction resistance, Jane Nascimento de Oliveira, lamented, “The [then] major, Eduardo Paes, publicly told us that that ‘little paper’ was not worth anything”—referring to the grants citizens received from the former governors (Article 138).

Years prior to Rio 2016, Vila Autódromo residents were pressured by the city to make way for Olympic building projects. At first the community joined together in resistance with the support of different favela residents’ associations; however, years of threats of eviction and demolition eventually drove people away. The government pressed families to leave by cutting electricity and water, which were already of poor quality, in addition to frequently verbally and physically harassing residents. As residents vacated their houses, the authorities sent tractors to the favela to bulldoze structures in a conscious

effort to intimidate and frighten the remaining residents. Some inhabitants of the community described these efforts as acts of psychological terror. A citizens' news piece written collectively by Vila Autódromo community members says:

This prompt daily ritual doesn't just lead to physical exhaustion but also emotional exhaustion for everyone. The city tries to weaken the community's resistance.

Keeping everyone in a state of constant alertness is a clear strategy of psychological terror. (Article 34)

Just days before the opening ceremony of the Olympics, the homeowner of the last standing original house in Vila Autódromo was interviewed by various media sources. Delmo de Oliveira shares:

It appears the mayor and governor have carried out a systematic approach of intense physical and psychological terrorism because they've really been efficient in ejecting people from here. But I will not leave here. We've been on this land for 30 years, 30 years fighting to stay, and it won't be now that I leave. (Wilkson, 2016, para. 4)

The waterfront land of Vila Autódromo became the Olympic Park where massive state-of-the-art arenas, stadiums, and media centers were built for the Games. In order to clear the land for the erection of Olympic facilities, the city misplaced approximately 3,000 people who once lived in the fishing community. Thousands of other residents from numerous favela complexes and neighborhoods across Rio faced eviction or threats of eviction leading up to the Olympics. The injustice of forced eviction by the city government is widely covered in citizens' media, which serve to inform the public as well as band residents and supporters together in solidarity for resistance campaigns.



**Gentrification.** While some favelas have been destroyed because of their location, others are being reconditioned for their location. Many favelas are situated on highlands. As the Olympics encroached and the world began to focus on Brazil, favelas in the South Zone of Rio, notably Vidigal, São Conrado, and Rocinha, which overlook the city's world-famous beaches, attracted public and private investors and entrepreneurs with purchasing power. Such outsiders to the favelas are interested in developing these elevated areas for their picturesque views (see *Figure 7*). Real estate speculation has increased dramatically in favelas with ocean views, which has cast out residents who have been living in the communities for decades. Gentrification processes and the increasingly globalized “favela chic” phenomenon have altered these communities (Cummings, 2015, p. 87). Resident of Vidigal, Rosa Batista, speaks to the community losing its character:

There are more and more people living here. And the kind of people coming in is changing. Before, this was a place where everybody knew each other, but now it's a sea of different people, different businesses—especially foreign ones. They don't know Vidigal. They come from the outside and they already have resources, while those who have been here forever can barely keep their work going. People are afraid this will turn into an elitist neighborhood... which has long been the dream of elites who have always wondered, 'How come those favela people get to live in such a fabulous place with that view?' (Article 59).



Figure 7. The view from the favela Vidigal (Assis, 2013). Retrieved from [goo.gl/hhv1wd](http://goo.gl/hhv1wd)

Newcomers who have purchased property at the top of Vidigal are redesigning the favela, which is transforming the economic and cultural life of Vidigal. Mery Ellen Alentejo, a resident of the community says:

There are significantly higher prices for everything. Rents and prices at the supermarket have gone up a lot... everything is more and more expensive. I've seen a lot of houses turning into bars, hostels, and restaurants. It seems the community is gearing itself more and more toward tourism and losing the character it had. I came because I didn't have anywhere to live. Vidigal was the most affordable area in Rio de Janeiro on my income. I felt at home here because it was a lot like the neighborhood where I was born and raised, with the streets always full of kids playing and people talking. Since the UPP came in a lot of people who didn't own their homes have had to move out because of rent increases—including friends of

mine who were born here. It's getting more commercial and touristy. Every day there are more houses being built, apartment buildings, etc. (Article 58)

According to Williamson (2015), "In Rio, the government is actively funding gentrification in these desirable communities under the pretext of poverty alleviation," when in actuality, citizens are being forced out of their homes (52:00). A member of the Vidigal Residents' Association, Rosa Batista, poses questions:

Who are they here for? They'd like to serve the people in the favela, but basically it's the people from the 'asphalt' (as in the 'formal' city that receives greater public investment) who end up coming here. My first thought was: 'The asphalt has come up the hill.' But at the same time, everybody had wanted that barrier broken down. There's a positive side... but for residents, what comes with that? (Article 58)

Although social integration of the formal and informal parts of the city is a goal, gentrification processes dislocate favela residents and replace them with middle-class households (Cummings, 2015). Gentrification threatens the livelihoods of residents who are already systematically excluded from the formal housing and job markets.

**Democratic elections.** The past decade has been tumultuous for political leaders and citizens of Brazil. There have been some steps forward in terms of political inclusion however also flagrant corruptive measures within the federal government. In 2011, Dilma Rousseff, of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*—Workers Party (PT)—was elected the 36<sup>th</sup> president of Brazil—the first woman to ever hold presidential office. However, in August 2016, immediately after the Olympics, Rousseff was impeached by the Brazilian senate, which citizens reflect on in a collection of opinion articles written by favela residents called the "Impeachment Series" on Rioonwatch.org.

The Workers Party, a far-left movement, seeks to extend workers' rights and improve access to public services, notably, education. By effectuating affirmative action, numerous underprivileged students have been admitted to public institutions in recent years. Yet, with the impeachment of President Rousseff, a founder of the PT, residents of the city, particularly residents of the favelas, are upset by their loss of rights.

***Impeachment.*** In the Impeachment Series, Rio citizens argue that the impeachment is a coup against the majority—the working class and their rights. Community journalist Miriane Peregrino writes:

Dilma's impeachment is a parliamentary coup that removes a democratically elected president with a majority vote in the 2014 elections (54.5 million votes for Dilma Rousseff of the PT and 51 million for Aécio Neves of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party, PSDB). Interim President Michel Temer has announced a series of unpopular measures such as cutting labor rights, (Christmas bonuses, holidays, pensions, maternity leave, childcare, and others) which directly affect workers' lives. (Article 6)

Cleber Araújo Santos shares, "Everything we've seen via the traditional media as well as other alternative media outlets has made us sure that what is going on is no less than a coup designed to topple a popular government that helped the poor" (Article 26). Gizele Martins, community communicator from Complexo da Maré says, "I don't think they'll ever guarantee any kind of rights for all of the population" (Article 5). Later Martins adds:

I believe that the government only serves to attend to a white, rich minority who live in the formal city—those who run and have always run the country. They are big businessmen, landowners, and commercial media owners. They think they own

the country. A coup did take place. It's a coup against the popular classes, against us, poor, Black, women, Northeasterners, from the favela. It's a coup against the majority that has never been assisted by any government, a coup against a population that fights to this day to survive. (Article 5)

The long fought battle for rights and policy for the low socio-economic class has been apart of favela life from the very beginning. Some rights and policies were gained during the administration of Rousseff. Jeferson Dias, resident from Cerro Cora shares Martins opinion:

The impeachment was a guarantee of privilege for various conservative sectors of the population and the right wing of society. Over the course of the last 13 years, they couldn't stand and didn't want to see the inclusion of the favelas in policy. We are a large part of the working class. (Article 6)

Jeferson's twin brother, Janderson, commented on one of Temer's pronouncements:

Yesterday I saw an announcement from the coup's president, which caught my attention because it said he was going to pacify Brazil. I recalled the pacification model in Rio's favelas, which only ended up bringing police while basic services such as health, housing, and education remain lacking. He is already implementing unpopular measures, which will directly affect us favela residents. This government wasn't chosen by popular vote; it has no reason to provide for us. We will have to keep resisting as we have always done. (Article 6)

For many years citizens of Brazil have fought for their rights. With the impeachment of Rousseff, favela residents express their feeling that their rights are being infringed upon, being that the elected president was forced out of office without having committing any crime or offense. In reply to RQ1, favela residents use citizens' media as a forum to display

the needs, desires, problems, and frustrations of their communities, particularly deficient public services, policies, and rights.

### **III. Discontent with Urban Violence and the UPP Program**

Rio de Janeiro is often called one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Violence in Rio may be best understood by looking into Brazil's history, principally, how conflicts were managed during the colonial era and how policing developed over time under different types of government. However, to understand resident accounts within citizens' media, it is important to recognize that most violence in Rio today is committed by drug factions, militias, or police (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015). While these three groups clash, favela residents are caught in the crossfire.

Illegal drugs and drug traffickers entered the favelas in the mid-1980s (Arias, 2006; Perlman, 2009; Alves & Evanson, 2011; Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015). Due to their complex, irregular layout, "favelas are appealing locations for drug gangs" because of the "narrow, winding alleys, abundant hiding places, and unemployed youth" (Perlman, 2009, p. 165). In addition to their topography, negligence by the state is the reason these localities became fortresses for illegal drugs and arms. Along with the presence of the drug trade in the favelas came the presence of lethal violence. For decades in Rio, drug gangs have fought each other for control over favorable territories. Common residents have suffered, not only in terms of violence, but also by the mere immanency of the drug trade, which has caused weak community economies, decreased property values, and public reproach. In more recent years, as the military police have been assigned to combat drug traffickers—or *bandidos* as they are called—tensions between traffickers and police have

increased violence in the favelas, and often, civilians from these urban communities are casualties.

Unlike drug traffickers and police who are both part of larger, organized networks, militias are self-appointed, independently operating vigilantes—usually retired policemen who assassinate those involved in drug-related movements and transactions (Alves & Evanson, 2011; Oosterbaan, van Wijk, 2015). Militias execute drug users and sellers and charge residents with protection fees. The practice of extortion along with the dangers of living amongst drug trafficking and police violence has driven many residents out of the favelas (Perlman, 2009).

Although drug trafficking does in fact take place and pose problems for residents, it is approximated that only 1 percent of favela residents are involved in drug trafficking; in actuality, many favelas do not have a drug gang presence at all (Williamson, 2015; Perlman, 2009). The long-standing conception that favelas are places of violence is mainly because of drug faction battles; however, state intervention prior to the Olympics has escalated conflicts. Narratives from citizens' media divulge the details of peril for favela tenants.

**UPP program.** In recent years, as Rio de Janeiro has gained international attention for hosting sporting mega-events, the city government has been motivated to increase security for tourists and cariocas. Rio's favelas have a reputation of being extremely violent; therefore, to improve and demonstrate security, Rio's State Security Secretary devised and administered a security project called the UPP program.

**Four phases of the UPP program.** The UPP program has two aims: to increase security in the favelas by restoring state control and to integrate the favelas and their residents into the formal city (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015). To accomplish these aims, the

UPP program is implemented in four phases: tactical intervention, stabilization, implementation of the UPP, and evaluation and monitoring.

**(1) Tactical intervention.** In the first phase, two teams of police enter the favelas: (1) *Policia Civil*—Civil Police and (2) *Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais*—Police Special Operations Battalion (BOPE). The civil police are responsible for investigating crimes and criminal factions. Meanwhile, the BOPE's mission is to exert order and control over drug traffickers and community members. In citizens' stories that were published earlier within the data set, residents generally express a feeling of relief that the government was intervening with controlling drug factions. Claudio Oliveira, a resident of Vila Kennedy for 45 years, shared his thoughts regarding the UPP program:

I'm happy with the arrival of the UPP. It has been very difficult to live with these drug trafficking wars. We have all the hopes that everything improves. The working class, good and honest people are happy. (Article 94)

However, once the UPP program began and the civil police and BOPE entered the favelas, quickly, a different sentiment was realized. Davidson Coutinho, a lifelong resident of Rocinha said:

The dream of a better life emerged: the installation of a Pacifying Police Unit. The promise was that it would be a better life, free from violence, all with the objective of spreading peace. However, threats, oppression, beatings, and torture were happening in the alleyways. Workers being hassled as they leave work, people being considered suspects and treated in a way that no human deserves to be treated. Residents being addressed in a shocking manner, beaten, suffocated and pepper



sprayed. We cannot take any more oppression. We need freedom. We are human beings; we deserve respect. (Article 99)

**(2) Stabilization.** In the second phase, the BOPE invade favela residences looking for drug traffickers and related contraband. In citizens' stories, residents maintain that officers are aggressive and menacing. Documentary photographer, Luiz Baltar, describes the consequences of the BOPE's presence in the favelas during the first two phases of the UPP program:

The BOPE, as everyone knows, is a military interventionist force trained for critical situations and the war against drug trafficking. In existence for over three decades, the force has staged innumerable operations in favelas, culminating in massacres and deaths of residents. With the actions of this new 'command,' the UPPs [BOPE] become the new 'bosses of the hill,' deciding what can and cannot be done, and by whom. (Article 93)

Juliana Portella reports:

Frightened residents of City of God have been living in a state of fear due to constant police operations, gunfire, and the presence of armored tanks used by the BOPE.

Residents are questioning the role and effectiveness of the UPP program and claim that their rights are being violated. Some people prefer not to leave their homes for fear of what could happen on days of police operations. (Article 18)

The military police interfere with residents' right to come and go from their homes, and although the force is supposed to target drug traffickers, the BOPE raided homes of inhabitants who were completely uninvolved and unassociated with drug factions. In support of Baltar and Portella, Maria Helena Moreira Alves adds:

Where the UPPs [BOPE] have been installed, people have their most basic constitutional rights violated on a daily basis. The police come in and out of houses when they want, they fire at anyone they want, and with all the justification of fighting a bigger enemy: the drug trafficker. (Article 93)

According to Vitor Paz:

The behavior of these agents of the State has been totally inappropriate: stop and searches with no specific criteria, invading houses without a search warrant, and complete disrespect for residents who have nothing to do with all that has gone wrong. We have seen people being physically and verbally abused. (Article 80)



*Figure 8.* The BOPE inside the favela (Baltar, 2014). Retrieved from [goo.gl/KR5JGT](http://goo.gl/KR5JGT)

The program epitomizes the dissimilarity between how those in informal barrios are treated compared to those in the rest of the city. Carrying military firearms, the BOPE ride

through the favelas in tanks (see Figure 8). Diana Anastacia underscores the distinction between police behavior in the formal city versus police demeanor in the favelas:

The approach of the police in the favela is complete different from their approach outside it on the 'asphalt.' In addition to carrying high caliber arms that are used in wars, these police officers are underprepared, carry out operations at any hour, and shoot at passers-by who look to them like suspects. The typical suspect is Black, and the orders obeyed by the police are 'shoot first and ask later.' These agents are authorized to kill, and their acts take on various proportions: verbal, physical, and psychological aggression and terror, body searches, invasion of homes, rapes, tortures, disappearances, and the genocide of the Black population—mainly young men. (Article 10)

Student from the favela, Mauro Leocadio depicted a sighting of the BOPE:

The other day I was leaving the house and going to my course when I saw a squad of Shock Troop vehicles. This doesn't happen in affluent areas. I wonder why it is necessary to have so many armed men like that. I felt vulnerable. The UPP is not a project of peace; it is far from that. Their presence has not ended the violence. (Article 18)

Rather than securing communities and protecting residents, many feel an increased sense of danger because of the military police occupation. Mariana Albanese, journalist, editor, and human rights activist from Vidigal, shares a well-known story within the community about a BOPE invasion:

The BOPE killed six people in a house they invaded. The owner of the residence, lying on the ground under a police gun, tried to say that he was not a criminal. He

was only saved when his dog came and licked him, proving he lived there. He was saved, but he would have been killed because the BOPE does not make arrests; it only kills. It has always been the same approach: shoot, then afterwards find out whom the victim was. (Article 96)

These resident accounts in citizens' media expose the BOPE as a violent force that operates with hostility toward residents. Although designed to alleviate communities of drug traffickers, the initial invasion of the BOPE in the first two phases of the UPP program "involves abuse of ordinary citizens" (Freeman, 2014, p. 21). In living under the control of drug traffickers and militias for decades, residents were appeased by the government's promise that the UPP program would relinquish communities to their residents. However, with the entrance of the BOPE into favela communities and neighborhoods, residents affirm that they are still living under control (Oosterban & van Wijk, 2015).

**(3) Implementation of the UPP.** In the third phase of the UPP program, the BOPE yields control of favela territories to the UPP officers. The UPP is a separate unit that consists of young military police who have training in human rights. The UPP's mission is to establish community policing in the favelas. The objectives of the unit are to "reduce shoot-outs, increase the sense of security, and exert a positive influence on the living conditions in the favelas" (as cited in Oosterbaan & Wijk, 2015, p. 182). However, in citizens' journalism, residents declare that the program has failed to meet its objectives. Rather than focusing on the improvement of security and services for everyday people, residents largely believe the UPP is meant to exercise control over poor communities (see *Figure 9*) and make evident the safety of tourists for mega-events. Renata Souza, a resident of Complexo da Maré offers her perspective:

The army comes here with the clear objective of giving a sense of security to those coming for the Games. When the army arrived here, it was a few days prior to the 2014 World Cup. They sent a message like: 'We are dominating this space for those who are coming from abroad to feel safe in our wonderful city.' (Article 64)



*Figure 9.* UPP officers in the favela (Baltar, 2013). Retrieved from [goo.gl/BIqjh](http://goo.gl/BIqjh)

In citizens' media some residents admitted that they would rather drug gangs control their neighborhoods because despite clashes between rival factions, residents are mostly left alone. Human rights activist and resident of Vidigal, Mariana Albanese explains:

Knowing the whole context is vital to understanding the animosity towards the UPP. They hassle honest residents and impose rules in the community that make life even more difficult than when 'the other management' was in charge. In addition to the violence, there is extreme social control over daily life. The philosophy of

pacification is based on the principle that everyone is a suspect until proven otherwise. There have been numerous cases when UPPs have stopped a children's party or group of gatherings... the UPP have the final word; they simply decide that you won't celebrate your birthday. (Article 96)

Notwithstanding initial feelings of relief, the UPP program felt like a greater enemy of favela residents enduring pacification. In a resident account of violence in Complexo do Alemão, Vitor Paz shares:

Today I woke up reflecting on what is going on in my favela. I started to realize that we have been led to believe that peace was within reach. We were deceived. In my humble view this so-called UPP project forgot a central character: the human being, the residents of the areas to be 'pacified.' The aim was to gain visibility for the program. The main concern was to show the world that Rio de Janeiro is 'safe' to receive thousands of visitors for mega-events. It was a barefaced lie that the best way to carry out pacification would be the implantation of UPPs. Local people were never respected during operations—shots were fired randomly. The State has failed overwhelmingly in its mission to bring peace. An abyss of fear and uncertainty has been created; everyone now wants the UPP project to leave. (Article 80)

In alignment with Paz's claim that shots were fired randomly in Complexo do Alemão, Rogerio de Souza witnessed similar open fire in City of God:

They came to kill. The street was calm and suddenly men appeared shooting at nothing. I've lived here since I was born and never seen anything like it. It is unbelievable what happened. It was cowardice. The walls in the streets are full of bullet holes. (Article 42)

Much like the psychological terror imposed during forced evictions, residents describe terror of the military police. Antonio Carlos Vieira, another resident of Complexo da Maré adds:

The current situation is one of permanent tension. The occupation that is being conducted, in my opinion, is wrong because it transfers a public safety issue to the military, that is, army forces that are trained for war. This ends up causing the attacks we have witnessed, with violent approaches that end up resulting in the deaths of innocent people. I also see that there is a strong psychological factor at play with the presence of armed men in defensive postures, compounded by heavy weapons and the constant movement of army tanks. This situation undoubtedly generates a collective trauma. (Article 64)

During the Olympics, Rafaela Silva, a judo player from City of God, became the first Brazilian woman to win a gold medal in her sport. Silva's accomplishment was a triumph for all of Brazil; and being a Black woman from the favela, Silva's feat gave all residents from Rio's periphery a reason to rejoice. However, due to violence in City of God, there was no celebration of Silva's victory. Community journalist Juliana Portella illustrates the atmosphere in the community following the Olympic event:

The community has recently experienced days of terror. Before going to the Arena Carioca 2 less than three kilometers away from City of God to watch their daughter become a champion, Rafaela's parents, Zenilda and Carlos, lived through a night of war on their doorstep. I am proud to see Rafaela win the gold, as a Black woman from a favela, and a person like me, but I can't forget the shots I heard from inside my house on Sunday. The sound of gunshots that were part of a police operation

echo in my mind and remove the Olympic spirit. There was no party in the favela for Rafaela's win, but there was yet another police operation in the favela for the third consecutive day. (Article 8)

This anecdote provides a sense of the ongoing fear and apprehension that favela residents experience under military police occupation. Being unable to enjoy the glory of Silva's Olympic gold medal shows yet again that hosting the Olympics in Rio was not designed for the benefit or pleasure of favela residents.

**(4) Evaluation and monitoring.** In the fourth phase, the favela is considered to be pacified. Another unit called UPP Social, which is run by the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, is tasked to integrate favela communities through enhanced social and public services. However, "UPP social does not itself perform activities" but rather is a coordinating body that "articulates initiatives that lead to local development in the pacified territories" (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015, p. 188). Most residents are unaware of UPP Social's actual role and resources; therefore, the branch is widely criticized. Although the UPP program is "supposed to end with peace, support, and engagement," many favela residents allege that the impact of the program has fallen short of its goals and caused greater social damage, distrust of the government, and death (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015, p. 182). UPP Coordinator Colonel Frederico Caldas admits, "when the UPP arrived, public service projects did not accompany the process of pacification" and "the project is far from ideal because police officers act wrongly" (Article 83). Mariana Albanese shares her view, which coincides with the contention that the city government has misplaced public priorities:

My opinion is that the UPP system does not solve any one of the roots of the problem; it's merely a form of social control. To truly make the favela a part of the



city, citizens need rights, sanitation, education, and health services.” (Article 96) Joining Albanese is Thaís Cavalcante who says that it is “difficult surviving amid a militarized favela that receives investments for security but not for health” (Article 78). Aside from the program failing to implement social and public services in the fourth phase of the UPP program, residents confirm that drug trafficking still takes place in the favelas (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015). Resident Raff Giglio points out, “All favelas and communities in Rio de Janeiro that have the UPP—they all still have drug trafficking. And the asphalt neighborhoods have it too” (Article 58). Some claim that drug traders “have simply migrated to other favelas outside the program and away from the attention of the government” (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015, p. 186).

The Rio municipal government reasons that the UPP program has boosted security, access to public services, and assimilation of underserved communities, however, favela residents express in citizens’ media that their communities have instead suffered from pacification processes. Citizens believe that their communities were more peaceful before the UPP program began.

**Residents’ accounts of homicides.** Police response to the drug trade is responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people in the favelas (Perlman, 2009). In citizens’ media on RioOnWatch.org, there are many stories about deaths within communities of the urban periphery. Community-generated media about residents’ deaths seem to be the only media coverage victims and families of victims receive. Articles are overwhelmingly about innocent citizens who died incidentally during police operations.

Investigator of media activism, Léo Custódio reports, “With each new murder in the city people ask themselves ‘another one?’ Answers to who killed whom, and why, are rare.

Despite the investigations, most cases remain unexplained” (Article 86). In a resident news piece, Eliane Trindade says at least “the drug trafficker doesn’t bother you. I’m definitely more afraid of the police” (Article 29).

In considering RQ1, these narratives expose that urban violence is, in fact, a reality of some favelas in Rio; however, from these stories it is clear that violence is not endemic to the favelas or their population. Favela residents stress that violence in their communities amidst the Olympics has been carried out by military police of the UPP program, which set out to achieve peace by protecting residents from disputing drug factions. Supposedly virtuous citizens have been harmed by accident; yet, residents claim that BOPE and UPP officers are outright destructive, disrespectful, and disruptive to the everyday affairs of common folks. From these citizens’ accounts, favela residents portray their lives as being under the control of turbulent forces—once the drug gangs and lately the military police. Bearing in mind RQ2, the reportages of deaths in independent media serve the population in a way that mainstream media do not.

#### **IV. Expressions of Culture**

A meaningful theme in citizens’ media is expressions of culture. The favelas are a source of culture not just for Rio de Janeiro but also for all of Brazil. The cultural contributions of the periphery cannot be overlooked when imagining, experiencing or understanding Brazilian culture and life. At the heart of the favelas is a tradition of innovation and community solutions, which has become an element of the favelas’ collective culture. It is important to remember that all of the favelas are vast communities with individual neighborhoods within each of them. However, perhaps what may define the favelas is their inclination as communities to create space, art, identity, and alternative

solutions as well as to organize independently in adverse circumstances. These creations exemplify the culture of the favelas. The most impressive, rich, and uplifting of the messages produced by citizens' media from the favelas are stories about favela culture.

**Language, arts, and festivals.** Within the data set, there are many examples of art from the favelas including literature, performing arts, and film. These cultural expressions exhibit the resilience of favela residents in the face of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion.

In Complexo do Chapadão, philosopher and cultural producer, Jocemir Moura dos Reis, created the Paulo Freire Community Library, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in June 2016. To celebrate ten years in operation, Jocemir held the first annual *Festa Literária do Complexo do Chapadão*—Literary Festival of Complexo do Chapadão (FLICC). A resident of the favela, Diogo Oliveira, attended the FLICC having benefitted from its founding. Initially, Oliveira was a visitor to the library participating in weekly workshops and debates. He became the first person in his family to attend college—an accomplishment that he says is due to his discovery of the library. Today, he helps manage the community library. Oliveira comments:

We are moving forward without any public resources, and even though the efforts are for the community, we face many challenges. We have a small team, which makes it more difficult. Even with all of the difficulties and problems, we never lose our pleasure in the work. Our audience is growing. We adopted a strategy of always creating events, like literature gatherings, film screenings and exhibitions. (Article 20)

Moura dos Reis highlights that the main purpose of the event is to “showcase the neighborhood as a center for cultural production,” which is a reality of the favelas that is “excessively hidden by mainstream media” (Article 20). The library collection has more than 3,500 books and receives around 150 visitors per month. Book titles in the library range from Camões<sup>8</sup> to Julio Ludemir.

Julio Ludemir is a co-founder of the annual *Festa Literária das Periferias*—Literary Festival of the Urban Periphery—known by the acronym FLUPP, which is a five-day program of events that showcase art and artists, not only from the favelas but from all over the world. Participants are invited to perform, speak, or lead workshops in favela communities. Hosted by different favelas in Rio each year, the festival brings together authors, poets, musicians, dancers, filmmakers, and other artists to share their work and experiences with favela communities. Ludemir states, “People who say that favelas are not places for books and culture are mistaken. I am always surprised by the quantity of people at FLUPP. I always think not enough people will come. This festival always exceeds my expectations” (Article 77). In support of Joceir’s statement, Alexandre dos Santos, a resident and journalist of Mangueira, where the third annual FLUPP was celebrated said, “Favelas are not just places of violence and confrontation. It’s important to see Mangueira in the news for hosting a cultural event like this” (Article 77).

Similar to the literature festivals, Providência put on the *Festival Subindo a Ladeira*—Climbing the Hill Festival—a performing arts gathering, which took place over the course of one day in the Largo do Cruzeiro Square. The festival included performances by theatre, film, dance, and capoeira groups and clubs. There was also a presentation on

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<sup>8</sup> Luís Vaz de Camões (c. 1524-1580) from Lisbon, Portugal is considered the greatest poet of the Portuguese language.

urban gardening and environmental education. Juliana Melo, a director and actor from the dance group, *Efeito Urbano*, praised the festival's initiative:

It's through combining our strengths that we manage to achieve things. I think art is a weapon that works for good. I carry my dance as if it were a weapon for good. I say to the kids that dance is a way for us to work on concepts such as respect, ending discrimination and breaking taboos. Art is a kind of magic. (Article 9)

The festival featured ten short films at the end of program, which covered issues such as gentrification, racism, religion, and childhood in the favelas. Alexandre Lourenço from Cidade Nova, curated the film screenings and also showed his own production, *Olhares da Providência*—Viewpoints of Providência. Lourenço claimed, "The film screening moved a lot of residents in the audience who in many cases could recognize either themselves, their neighbors or places on screen"—an opportunity for favela residents to see themselves and their community pictured in an authentic fashion (Article 9).

The São Clemente Grêmio Recreativo Samba School (GRES) puts on parades, each with different themes. Guilherme Junior watched the parade themed "favela" and afterward recounts:

The school did not make many criticisms about the system that makes life in the favela chaotic. Instead, it preferred to show the human side of what is one of the most fertile sources of Brazilian culture. This may have been a choice, to vary the discourse on favelas, which is almost always focused on social problems. (Article 95)

Although some enjoy seeing the favela commended for its vivacity, others feel these glorifications evade their harsh history and present-day reality. Rosilene Milotti conveys

her impressions of the show:

The tendency to show the most ‘marketable’ aspects of the communities reinforces stereotypes. This representation of the favela produces a distorted portrait: the favela looks like a place of samba, funk, barbecues on the rooftop patios, black bean stew—when it is much more than that. The school made the questionable decision to show the favela almost entirely in a positive light. This is understandable given that the negative side of favelas is reported daily in the press, but at the same time, the chance was missed to show something real. It looks like everything is beautiful, but it isn’t. With the theme ‘favela,’ one could have hoped for richer content. (Article 95)

Because Rio’s favelas are so densely populated, sprawling throughout different regions of the city, and unique in their own distinct ways, perhaps favela cultures cannot be represented in an all-encompassing way. As with any place, there are positive and negative aspects that comprise the experience of living in Rio’s urban periphery, and hiding either side—the good or the bad—is untrue to the favela.

Still, favela life and culture is romanticized, commercialized, and marketed (see *Figure 10*). Albeit wonderful to think of the favelas as places full of merriment, favela life is about the constant struggle for liberty. Daiene Mendes, a resident of Nova Brasília Complexo do Alemão observes:

Their culture started to be consumed, recognized, and even appropriated by some. People from all over the world came and took an interest in their history, how they are organized, their customs and their values. They transformed the favela—once a symbol of violence, exclusion, and marginality—into a sellable and acceptable

product. It became hip to wear Havaianas, the cheapest and most reliable flip-flops, mainly worn by poor people. Favela funk music was modified, to such a point that it became acceptable and very present in the lives and parties of the city's rich. The multiplicity of people, lives, and stories that exist in the favelas make it impossible to say what a favela is or what it is not. The only thing that defines the favela context is struggle and resistance. (Article 11)



*Figure 10.* Havaianas advertisement of the 'marketable' favela. Retrieved from [goo.gl/55x1kW](http://goo.gl/55x1kW)

The history of Rio's favelas is the foundation that favela cultures are built upon; therefore, the struggles for human rights, liberties, and peace over decades are very much apart of what makes periphery communities what they are as well as what makes their cultural creations and contributions so compelling.

Commentary under this theme fairly directly answers RQ1 and RQ2 in that through expressions of culture in citizens' media people from the urban periphery can exhibit cultural events that do not receive coverage in traditional media. While media normally focus on negative incidents in the favelas, community journalists give attention to positive, influential leaders and occasions in the favelas.

## **V. Impact of the Olympic Games**

In citizens' media before, during, and after the Olympic Games, the people of Rio discuss the impact of the mega-event on the city. Although the city promised that the Games would bring much needed improvements to the lives of citizens in Rio, many debate the actual costs and benefits of the massive undertaking. In citizens' media, cariocas assess the impact of the Olympics on the city and its people.

**Olympic legacy.** As briefly mentioned, the Olympic Charter is a constitutional instrument that sets forth the principles and values of Olympism, the mission and role of the IOC, and the rights and obligations of constituents of the Olympic Movement. The document lists sixteen objectives, which make up the mission of the IOC and thus the Olympic Games. These objectives are focused on the placement of sport at the service of humanity and the center of societies in order to promote inclusion and peace. In 2003, the IOC added the 14<sup>th</sup> objective to this list, which is "to promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to the host cities and host countries" (IOC, 2015, p. 19). The most apparent legacies that the Olympic Games leaves for cities are event facilities, which are meant to benefit host communities after the Games by enhancing the population's quality of life through sport participation (Sousa-Mast et al., 2013, p. 332). Sporting facilities are built along with several other structures such as housing, roads, walkways, transportation



systems, parks, shopping centers, restaurants, and other physical infrastructures. Aside from these physical legacies, the objective of stimulating a positive legacy also includes development in social, economic, and cultural areas, for instance, in public health, especially education and recreation.

The BOC and Rio municipal government have promised positive legacies to the IOC and the people of Rio; and although there have already been discussions in public discourse about the post-Olympic legacy in Rio, evaluating the overall effect of the Games requires more passing of time.

***Olympic myth.*** In citizens' media years before the Olympics, cariocas and journalists discussed and debated likely legacies of the mega-events. Most foresaw that the Olympic Games would not leave a positive inheritance for the city or citizens. Locals call this the "Olympic myth"—the recurring idea in citizens' media that the BOC and city of Rio have fallen short of their Olympic promises and investments. In their article about the impact of mega-events on the city, Bruno Rodrigues and Thiago Ansel contend, "At the moment a coalition of market interests is using diverse strategies to reach its objectives, none of which have to do with improving the social welfare of Rio's citizens" (Article 132). Luiz Mário called attention to the absence of social legacy goals for Rio's population in proposals by Olympic organizers. In comparing the 2007 Pan-American Games with the 2016 Summer Olympics, Mário says:

All this debate about what is happening and the negative impacts that the events may bring we lived already with the Pan-American Games. The only difference is that then, at least, there was discussion of the benefits of the Games for the population and a social legacy. Today, this discourse is very obscure. (Article 132)

Five months before the opening ceremony, Cleber Araújo Santos identified false promises of the BOC and the city:

Public works were left incomplete. The roads that were meant to have been upgraded never got past the planning stages; the public spaces that were selected for building leisure spaces and sports grounds never arrived. Not to mention the broken promises regarding education; just one school was built in a hurry and it was built outside the favela. The initial promise was to bring security forces into the favela... to bring 'peace' to the residents in order to allow other public services that the communities lack to be brought in. But we are still waiting for these public services today. The failures of the project became more and more obvious since the only visible presence of the state here is armed: the barrel of a gun. (Article 26)

With pacification units patrolling their communities, favela residents seem disappointed in public expenditures that ultimately exacerbate discrimination and social inequality.

Olympic-related investments promoted in media as legacies that would benefit residents in the long-term, such as urban mobility projects, instead obstructed existing leisure and green space belonging to favela communities.

**Urban mobility.** Rio's Olympic venues were spread out in four zones of the city. Because arenas were designated in different areas, the city planned massive transportation projects to get spectators and tourists to and fro. These projects were designed to transport visitors during the Olympics and improve urban mobility for Rio locals after the Games. However, each of these transportation projects has been problematic. In citizens' media, favela residents discuss how their lives have changed because of transportation infrastructure.

Rio's mayor promoted the idea of a "bike friendly" city. The Rio Bicycle Capital City project, which was promoted in the media as an Olympic promise, guaranteed the installation of 22 kilometers of a shared bike path to run through the Maré favela complex. The challenges of bicycling in the favelas are the steepness of the hills, the narrow streets, the lack of pavement, and the lack of storage for bikes. Still, many favela residents opt to use bicycles because they are an inexpensive, reliable, sustainable, healthy mode of transportation. The project began with the creation of cycling infrastructure such as paving the bike path, posting signage, painting bike lanes, and installing bike racks; however, work on the project was halted and suspended when the budget for the construction was significantly reduced. According to resident Uesley dos Santos:

The project is poorly designed. For example in Nova Holanda favela, the path goes down Rua Texeira Ribeiro, one of the busiest streets in the community with a large volume of vehicles and pedestrians. It's the main street with commerce and markets. (Article 14)

Community journalists Carolina Paz and Thaís Cavalcante realize, "The planning does not apply to the streets of Maré: itinerant vendors work on the sidewalks and along roadsides; motorcycles, cars, and small trucks circulate the area, including on the path shared with cyclists" (Article 14). Although the Rio Bicycle Capital City project was intended to be an Olympic legacy that would enhance citizens' quality of life through increased urban mobility, residents have not benefitted from this project because planning was not delineated for existing space, and ultimately construction was not completed.

Other urban mobility projects meant to be Olympic legacies are the TransOímpica and Transcarioca bus rapid transit (BRT) systems as well as the extension of Rio's metro,

which was the most expensive construction project of the Olympics. All of these transportation developments, however, have brought on social, economic, and environmental issues.

With the intention of placing sport at the service of society, leaving a positive Olympic legacy, in theory, involves creating or rejuvenating green spaces such as public parks, squares, and recreational areas for sporting, exercise, and leisure—legacies the IOC wants for host cities. However, infrastructural projects like the TransCarioca Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, for example, negated existing green spaces for the purpose of providing transportation. While the BRT line was designed to transport tourists and spectators to event venues during the Olympics, the line is supposed to operate as a grounds transportation system for the people of Rio after the mega-event. The great potential for this project to leave a positive legacy for residents is overshadowed by the green spaces and vegetation that were destroyed in making space for the bus system. Community journalist Hugo Costa articulates:

The Rio city government, with the BRT route, eliminated the few sporting and recreation areas in the region. They destroyed four neighborhood squares, leaving an entire region of the Olympic City with no options for green, sporting, and recreational spaces, contrary to everything that a modern Olympics should provide for a host city. (Article 15)

Vanio Korrea, a Ramos resident for 40 years makes his indignation clear:

We already didn't have many public recreational areas and the few we had were destroyed. Nothing was replaced or compensated. A neighborhood like Ramos, with a huge residential area, should include a large recreational area, but now we don't

even have small squares, and the children risk death by playing in the lanes for the BRT. Like the [other] neighborhoods cut through by the railway, we need ramps and pedestrian bridges. But the opposite has happened; we lost another pedestrian bridge. The mayor built another overpass in a residential neighborhood for the BRT to pass. We have the clear impression that we are just that: a place for the BRT to pass through, as if we didn't live here with the same rights to access recreation, sports, and culture as the rest of the city! (Article 15)

Unfortunately parks, gardens, and public squares are insufficient in quantity considering the local need in neighborhoods affected by the construction of transportation systems. Although improving urban mobility through alternative transportation (i.e. the bicycle path) and public transportation (i.e. the BRT), poor planning, inadequate funding, and destruction of existing urban areas have weakened these Olympic legacies.

**Tourism.** One of the biggest legacies of the Olympics is the rise in tourism in Rio. In citizens' media, favela residents express how tourism has changed their communities. The phenomenon in which the socio-spatial entity that is the favela is commoditized and consumed as a touristic attraction is called slum tourism. Although offsetting stereotypes, reducing stigma, and integrating the favelas into the formal city are ambitions of the urban periphery, favela tourism is not an ideal way for residents to gain greater agency in expressing and sharing their identities, communities, and cultures. In Rio's pacified favelas, slum tourism has become an industry. José Elias, resident and local tour guide says, "The demand for Santa Marta is huge; it's the favela that is truly pacified" (Article 70). Another tour guide in Santa Marta, José Mário, weighs the pros and cons of favela tourism:

We receive around 10,000 tourists per month. The positive is that it creates an expectation among the community; it improves businesses, people are interested in speaking other languages: English, Spanish, French. There is that positive side of it, but the negative is that the community feels like an attraction park where people come here and see the community like animals at a zoo. They come, walk around, look at people and then leave. That's the negative side, I think. (Article 70)

In pacified favelas such as Santa Marta, companies have begun giving guided Jeep tours.

Writer Marcelo Mirisola declares:

There is nothing, there is no disgrace in this city that can compare to the savagery of Jeeps filled with tourists armed with cameras on the stereotypical hunt, ascending the hills. It is worse than a safari. The name for this is not tourism. The name for this is humiliation. (Article 66)

Slum tourism in the favelas is an exploitative phenomenon that has potential to deeply insult residents. In spite of humiliation, Thiago Firmino, a resident of the community proposes an idea that could better the circumstance of tourism in favelas:

The Jeep tour comes into the Santa Marta favela without using a local guide; and with no respect for the residents, the tourists take photographs wildly. They don't tell the true story of the favela and come in only to exploit without taking into consideration the impact they are having. The ideal is to do a respectful tour—one that can generate local income. One that is led by a local guide who can tell the true story of the favela and attempt to demystify the stereotypes that are ascribed to favela residents. (Article 66)

If favela residents cannot regulate tourism in their neighborhoods, Itamar Silva cautions that favela tourism may devalue favela cultures:

If residents do not organize and take on leadership in the touristic and entertainment actions in Santa Marta, we will see the natives serving as guinea pigs for ventures and initiatives from outsiders—at the expense of a local identity that will slowly lose its characteristics. (Article 114)

Tourism in Rio's favelas is widely seen as a degrading practice that stems from a curiosity about inequality and poverty. In citizens' media, residents make clear that favela tourism is invasive and disparaging.

***Olympic facilities.*** The Olympic legacy in Rio has been in question since before the Games took place. Now that the Games are over, there is much discussion in public discourse about the impact of the Olympics on Rio. In February 2017, just six months after the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games, news articles and photographs surfaced in mainstream media exposing the city's struggle to maintain event facilities. In the Barra Olympic Park, along the Jacarepaguá Lagoon waterfront where the Vila Autódromo community once was, the nine colossal sporting venues have been seemingly abandoned. The city of Rio has been unable to sell and repurpose the majority of the Olympic facilities, and without enough money to maintain the stadiums, authorities have cut electricity and water and locked and boarded the buildings (see *Figure 11*). Plans to take venues apart and put the pieces back together as schools have fallen through. The strategy to profit by the selling the athletes' village as condominiums has failed due to a lack of interest in the units. Perhaps the most antithetical measure of the Olympics aftermath is the closing of the giant swimming pool that was used as the canoe slalom course during the Games. The pool was

open before the Olympics; however, now, in the middle of Brazil's actual summer, the pool is closed. In citizens' media, favela residents dispute the costs and benefits of the Olympics. These discussions will probably continue for years to come.



Figure 11. Aquatics Stadium 6 months after the Olympics (Olivares, 2017). Retrieved from [goo.gl/q100HW](http://goo.gl/q100HW)

**Collective memory.** Community storytellers are committed to preserving local memory by collecting the history, culture, and stories of their communities and building museums that honor the hardships and triumphs of favela residents. For example, Providência's local historian and church caretaker, Eron Cesar dos Santos, created a virtual museum for the community. Other favelas such as Complexo do Maré, Complexo do Alemão, and Vila Autódromo, have taken on community museum projects dedicated to forced evictions.

The Vila Autódromo community, which suffered a massive eviction and demolition



for the Olympic urban transformation, wrote an article about their evictions museum that says:

We have been suffering the erasing of our community due to forced evictions undertaken by the city of Rio de Janeiro. Despite this, our history hasn't been erased, and that is why we are building this museum. Given all this history of resistance over the last 20 years, we cannot allow our struggle to gain rights and to stay on the land where our lives were built to be forgotten. (Article 30)

Being that favelas are marginalized by larger society, their histories have to be actively recorded and stored in some way by residents. Thainã de Medeiros, a specialist in Museum Studies affirms, "Memory is a form of resistance" (Article 21). Regarding the Museu da Maré, Humberto Salustriano adds, "The opportunity of telling this story from the perspective of those who are subordinate, 'the conquered,' this is why the museum is important. It is counter-hegemonic" (Article 17). Miriane Peregrino writes, "It preserves the memory of the lower socio-economic classes, but also, it is a bottom-up initiative from within the favela, shifting the power center of decision-making regarding what is memorable in the city" (Article 17). This emphasis on the importance of collective, community memory may be considered a legacy of the Olympics.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This research offers an in-depth analysis of citizens' media published throughout the venture of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Mainstream and popular media depicting the favelas often dismiss the diverse realities of the people, cultures, and experiences of the favela population. As consequence, outsiders' impressions of the favelas are distorted, which ultimately dishearten favela residents. Therefore, this investigation of how favela residents portray their lives and communities as well as how citizens' media tell a counter narrative to dominant media, provides a richer understanding of the topics, issues, and discussions that are important to this historically marginalized populace. Being that the viewpoints and experiences of favela residents are not articulated in conventional media, the value in examining independent, community-based journalism is direct contact with citizens' narratives.

This project set out to identify major themes in 145 citizens' stories from the media collective RioOnWatch.org throughout the production of Rio 2016. Using a method of thematic analysis, results of this research reflect both positive and negative occurrences in the Rio's favelas. Five major themes are apparent in the data set: (1) portrayals of the favelas in media, (2) concerns regarding public policies and political processes, (3) discontent with urban violence and the UPP program, (4) expressions of culture, and (5) the impact of the Olympics.

In response to the research questions, through citizens' media favela residents reveal that their experiences of living in the urban periphery are varied. However, from themes within the data, many residents seem to share common concerns, interests, and challenges. Under the first theme, citizens explain their dissatisfaction and frustration with

mainstream journalism that usually stigmatizes, marginalizes, criminalizes, and stereotypes favela communities and inhabitants. Community communicators identify the need for alternative journalism, democratization of media, and a fight against censorship. Under the second theme, citizens specify main priorities within their communities, which are access to quality healthcare services, sanitation, and education. Favela residents address housing issues and inequalities, particularly increased eviction and gentrification during Olympic urban regeneration. Residents also comment on the impeachment of Brazil's elected former president and their loss of rights. Under the third theme, residents elaborate on the circumstance of living under the control of the military police and the violence that has manifested because of the state's pacification program. Under the fourth theme, journalists highlight cultural events in the favelas, which are seldom covered in mainstream media. Finally, under the fifth theme residents assess the impact of sporting mega-events on the city and the actuality of Olympic legacies. These themes are meaningful because they uncover matters that may otherwise be overlooked in other forms of media, especially Olympic-related media, which is underlain with media frames and interests of Olympic organizers.

The contribution of this work is a clearer discernment of the lives of favela residents as well as the trials that the city and people of Rio have faced in their preparation for the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Furthermore, this research advances knowledge about how citizens' media, ICTs, and the Internet have the potential to connect, organize, and empower marginalized communities in resistance efforts.

A limitation of this research is the absence of analysis of citizens' media from other media collectives since the only source of journalism was RioOnWatch.org. The data does

not mirror all perspectives and experiences of favela residents; hundreds of favelas were not mentioned in the data set. Another limitation is the timeframe of the sample of stories, which capture only a snapshot in time. Also, the text of stories were translated from Portuguese to English, therefore some meaning could have been lost since the original words of the authors were not analyzed in this study.

Future research could expand more specifically upon any of the themes from the results of this research. Further investigations using different methods of the impact of the Olympics on the host city and host population are necessary in the post-Olympics climate in Rio. There could also be media studies analyzing other news sources from other populations. Research on Olympic investments and legacies could be valuable to prospective host cities that may be interested in improving mega-events to better benefit the host population. Future research could lead to policy recommendations.

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## APPENDIX A: Thematic Analysis Phase 2 – generating initial codes

Age of criminal responsibility	Government neglect	Photography
Affirmative action	Health	Poetry
Afro-Brazilian culture	Historic preservation	Police brutality
Alternative media	History	Police intimidation
Army occupation	Homicide	Politics
Art	Housing	Prejudice
Bike path	Human rights	Protest
BOPE	Impeachment	Public security
Capoeira	IOC	Public space
Citizenship	Inclusion	Public transportation
Citizen journalism	Individual story/personal profile	Race
Collective memory	Inequality	Racism
Communication rights	Infrastructure	Real estate speculation
Community media	Internet	Religious freedom
Community museum	Journalism	Resistance
Community organizing	Laje	Right to come and go
Community solution	Law	Safety
Construction	Legacy myth	Samba
Corruption	Leisure	Sanitation
Criminalization of poverty	Literature	Segregation
Critique	Mainstream media	Slavery
Culture	Mass media	Social media
Democracy	Media portrayal of the favelas	Social movements
Diversity	Mega-events	Sports
Divided city	Memory	#StopFavelaStigma
Drug traffic	Military Police	State government
Education	Misplaced public priorities	State of exception
Elections	Mobility	Stigma
Empowerment	Music	Sustainability
Environment	Neighborhood association	Technology
Evictee profile	Olympic legacy	Testimonial
Evictions	Olympic myth	Theatre
Exclusion	Olympic Games	Torture
Exploitation	Opinion	Tourism
Favela culture	Oral history	Trump Towers
Federal government	Paralympics	UPP
FIFA	Participation	Urban violence
Film	Performing arts	Violations
Freedom of expression	Periphery	Violence
Funk		World Cup
Gentrification		Workers Party (PT)
		Youth

**APPENDIX B: Thematic Analysis Phase 3 – searching for themes**

- I. Favelas in media**
  - Alternative media
  - Citizen journalism
  - Communication rights
  - Community media
  - Criminalization of poverty
  - Critique
  - Empowerment
  - Freedom of expression
  - Internet
  - Journalism
  - Opinion
  - Social media
  - Stigma
  - #stopfavelastigma
- II. Public policies/Political processes**
  - Age of criminal responsibility
  - Affirmative action
  - Childrens' rights
  - Citizenship
  - Democracy
  - Education
  - Elections
  - Evictions
  - Exploitation
  - Gentrification
  - Government neglect
  - Health
  - Human rights
  - Impeachment
  - Inequality
  - Misplaced public priorities
  - Politics
  - Public services
  - Real estate speculation
  - Rights
  - Sanitation
  - State of exception
  - Transportation
- III. Urban violence/UPP program**
  - Army occupation
  - BOPE
  - Corruption
  - Death
  - Military occupation
  - Military police
  - Police intimidation
  - Police violence
  - Right to come and go
  - Torture
  - Urban violence
  - UPP
- IV. Culture**
  - Afro-Brazilian culture
  - Art
  - Capoeira
  - Collective memory
  - Community organizing
  - Favela culture
  - Festivals
  - Funk
  - Literature
  - Music
  - Poetry
  - Samba
  - Theatre
- V. Impact of Olympics**
  - Bike path
  - Green space
  - Infrastructure
  - Leisure space
  - Media
  - Olympic legacy
  - Olympic myth
  - Public spaces
  - Recreation
  - Tourism



**APPENDIX C: Citizens' articles from Community Contributors on RioOnWatch.org**

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