



Acts of seeing and making cities: reemployment as detour and invention

*Fazer ver, fazer cidade:
o reemprego como
desvio e invenção*



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Abstract: this article analyzes the intimate connection between the ways of elaborating what is visible and of producing a city in three Brazilian films made in recent years: *Nunca é noite no mapa* (It's never nighttime in the map, 2016), by Ernesto de Carvalho, and *Entretempos* (The time between, 2015), by Frederico Benevides and Yuri Firmeza. Focusing on the singular ways in which these films interrogate and confront certain visual representations of the urban space, we reflect about the relations between the technologies of what is visible and the technologies for the control and management of populations, highlighting the critical gesture of the films, which also impacts the composition of cities.

Keywords: Brazilian cinema; city; visualities; reemployment; detour.

Resumo: este artigo busca sublinhar o íntimo contágio entre maneiras de elaborar o visível e formas de produzir uma cidade, a partir de dois filmes brasileiros realizados nos últimos anos: *Nunca é noite no mapa* (2016), de Ernesto de Carvalho, e *Entretempos* (2015), de Frederico Benevides e Yuri Firmeza. Com uma atenção aos modos singulares através dos quais esses filmes interrogam e confrontam determinadas representações visuais do espaço urbano, propomos uma reflexão acerca das relações que se estabelecem entre as tecnologias do visível e as tecnologias de controle e gestão das populações, com ênfase no gesto crítico dos filmes, que também atuam na composição das cidades.

Palavras-chave: cinema brasileiro; cidade; visualidades; reemprego; desvio.

Introduction

In a journey of eyes and ears attentive to the relations between images, sounds, and city, we address here with two contemporary Brazilian films that present themselves as aesthetic and theoretical operators that question founding experiences of the production of urban space. *Nunca é noite no mapa* (It's never nighttime in the map, 2016), by Ernesto de Carvalho, and *Entretempos* (The time between, 2015), by Frederico Benevides and Yuri Firmeza, are short films that draw a critical thinking through film format and appear as works capable of bending the lines drawn by certain city projects, based on singular analytical gestures.

In both films, there is something recurring: the reemployment of different visualities coupled with urban management – the latter which occurs, most of the time, through procedures of exclusion, control, and erasure. As we will address later, *It's never nighttime in the map* uses the images made by Google Street View, which has its visual logic coupled, as the short film shows us, to processes of removal of communities and police violence. In *The time between*, the montage brings institutional videos from the city of Rio de Janeiro that point to the transformations to come, such as the works in the port region of the city in the context of the Porto Maravilha project³. What brings these works together is the fact that they adopt the risky position of including in their scripts visual materials that collaborate with projects of social exclusion and monitoring of territories – proposing, from appropriation tactics, detours in the forms organized by the look of the machines that produce this visible matter.

The two concise audiovisual essays⁴ teach us about decisive distinctions in the ways of conceiving space and subjective experience in the midst of it. The tension between line and detour, which interests us so much here, could be mounted with another occasion in the history of cinema: the encounter staged by Akira Kurosawa's film *Dersu Uzala* (1975), which narrates the relationship between Captain Arseniev, a Russian geographer on an expedition to the Siberian region, and Dersu, a nomadic hunter of the *nanai* people. From this film, we can retain an important lesson about lines, spaces, and bodies, approaching some propositions by Serge Daney (2007)

³ Porto Maravilha was a gigantic urban reform project carried out in this decade, in a context of accelerated changes that aimed to transform Rio de Janeiro into an "Olympic City." It is important to highlight the violent removal processes that were operated during this period, as organized by the Public Agency at the link <https://bit.ly/30yXXtI>. Access on: Apr. 16, 2020.

⁴ The conciseness manifests itself precisely in the very length of the films: *It's never nighttime in the map* has 6 minutes, while *The time between* unfolds over 7 minutes.

about the film. For Arseniev, the method always consists of scanning the space according to the parameters of geometry and metrics. To these procedures, Dersu will oppose another logic, as in the precise moment described by Daney (2007, p. 125):

During the exploration of Khanka Lake (a stretch of bravery justly admired), he [Arseniev] ignores Dersu's concerns and moves carelessly towards the heart of the icy spaces. His safety is the compass that always indicates the right direction, the north, the straight line. He did not foresee that the flat surface of the frozen lake was a *false plane*, alive, affected by incessant changes. The path he took on the way in became impractical on the way back: it is no longer the same. He imposes a *detour* on both men: the straight line is never the solution.

If the straight line is not the solution – Dersu's lesson – this is a strong ethical and political aim for the composition of modes of existence. In the visualities appropriated for the films analyzed here, there is a constant march towards the trampling of lives and memories, with the uplift of a sense of future: a mapping of the city, made by different vehicles, tracing lines of power and organization of the urban fabric; a sudden appearance of new cities, in abrupt and fast tones. A line is a sense, a direction, which carries rhythms, modulations, speeds. Interfering with these lines, this is our argument, happens through tactics of changing trajectories: political, visual, rhythmic tactics.

We will see, in each case, how this zone of clashes between line and detour takes place, to affirm a conception of the world, a perspective to inhabit the earth. The lesson we take from Kurosawa's film gives us the measure of a game that we can operate with these notions, in addition to a rigid (and straight) conceptual framework. Moving somewhat away from direct postulations, we prefer to say that line and detour always appear here as visual figures located in each case, capable of triggering contingent thoughts. Thus, along with the films, we will be able to unfold operative implications, immanent formal mechanisms, images of thought.

More broadly, then, what could interest us in these ways of drawing lines, between the straight and the detour, when it comes to thinking about the production of space in a city? In the field of forms, a complex struggle is at stake to decide which city a community will constitute⁵. In this dispute – constantly marked by conditions of

⁵ Authors such as Henri Lefebvre, Milton Santos, Doreen Massey, and Michel de Certeau – with due regard for singularities – work with this idea of space not as a simple fact of nature or culture, but as a result of diverse clashes, constantly organized (and reorganized) by social forces, modes of production, spatial and narrative practices – that is, a space that, in addition to being heterogeneous, is always in dispute.

inequality and asymmetry, embedded in our historical formation –, we are interested in stressing the following aspect: when State and Capital come together to say that a park will be cut in half for the construction of an overpass, for example, this act of management in space already projects a sensitive intervention within the common landscape. With an operation in urban forms, there is a radical change in the modes of circulation, in the composition of the visible, in the rhythms between slowness and speed, in the routes above or below, in the widest or narrowest paths. This is a first level of intervention in a scene, inseparable from producing a city.

Simultaneously, in addition to this first conception of the visual – the one that surrounds us in the urban fabric itself –, there is a dispute over the technologies that manufacture visibilities, technical images of various supports and creations. The images become, decisively, one of those areas where a city is also disputed, where the power relations are launched in tension, because the issue of *acts of seeing* acquires an enormous potential for the direction of *making cities*. We are especially interested in discussing what is at stake in the clash around some seeing machines⁶, in their materialities, in their conventions, in their operational logics.

When we refer to a field of images, we face here the task of looking at them in a broad way. Before being reemployed and introduced in other scripts, the images taken by these films already point to certain perspectives of the city. Once integrated into the montages of the short films, they begin to have their political operations simultaneously studied and reconfigured, so that the films collaborate to recompose a visible element and restore to the world other states of image – which contest these urban projects and suggest different ways to think about the city. Therefore, as we will argue, there is a dispute over space and ways of inhabiting it that permeates heterogeneous natures of articulating the ways of seeing.

Our gesture here is to elaborate a constant questioning about the close articulation between image and city production. We will seek to perceive, by the studies of the visible constituted by these works, specific regimes of visual operation in particular urban contexts. Our journey begins, especially, with the encounter of a man with a vehicle, an irradiating scene of *It's never nighttime in the map*, a film that will give us a whole basis to think about these city administrations interspersed with the seeing machines. As our journey will try to suggest, there is a kind of theoretical

⁶ In the wake of Michel Foucault's thought, Fernanda Bruno (2013) uses the expression "seeing machines" in different contexts than what we analyze here, such as in the field of surveillance. The author focuses her research on image production technologies; networked communication, security, and territory monitoring devices; interested in understanding how these *visibility regimes* work productively, in close connection with subjective and aesthetic processes.

inquiry that the film addresses to the world, based on formulations that allow us to echo the thoughts of authors such as Michel Foucault and Jonathan Crary. Carvalho's short film thus becomes our starting articulator to build some propositions that will also unfold in the dialogue with *Between the time*.

Each in its own way, the films produce displacements that put an optical coherence of spaces in check, causing dissonances and creating new relationships for the forces at play in these forms of representation. In other words, we will try to highlight the extent to which these contemporary Brazilian films impose crises on straight lines, adopting as a critical method some forms of detour.

How vehicles operate

Ernesto leaves the house, camera in hand. He goes out to try to prevent a car from entering the alley where he lives. It is the car that produces the 3D images that we can use, via Google services, to see images of city streets around the planet. This is the starting point for the short film *It's never nighttime in the map*: the day the director left home to photograph the Google Street View car. At that moment of encounter, Carvalho was caught by the map lens and entered it. This scene establishes a problematization that the director develops throughout the film: the contradictions between the alleged neutrality of the map and the lives that sneak in the images taken and made available by Google. We are facing a small and dense critical essay around the very nature of this map that acts as a strong instrument of control, in a proposal to analyze its visual logics. *It's never nighttime in the map* detects an intricate combination of forces that could have the word "vehicle"⁷ as an emblem, used by the voice over in deliberate recurrence. The film connects a network of vehicles that work together to manage the city: map vehicles, police vehicles, vehicles (tractors) of the new city. By highlighting the connection between these vehicles, the film puts in crisis a city project that needs these forces to be taken as separate and neutral. For this alleged objectivity, the technical image of the map is a perfect tool.

⁷The notion of "vehicle" becomes a unique theoretical-critical proposition elaborated by the film's thinking. In its own way – within the specificities of film writing and the Brazilian reality – this conceptual operator is close to some discussions already made by other authors (Crary, Foucault, Deleuze), as we will allude throughout this text, but without the purpose of doing elongated conceptual contextualizations, since our intention is to preserve this aspect of a vocabulary coming from the priority dialogue with the film.



Figure 1: Frame from the film *It's never nighttime in the map*.

Barefoot and with a camera in his hand, Carvalho finds himself on the map. Conversely, an image is made of this apparatus that operates in the territory. That day, the car failed to enter the street where someone was looking back. This countershot, which is also the exhibition of the anteshot (the region where the agents that produce the image are installed, since the image that appears in the countershot is the director himself), materializes a type of clash between the body scale and the vehicle scale. The film begins with images produced by satellite from the city of Olinda. Then, we dive into a street and go along it, as the yellow Google doll can do freely, being launched anywhere in the city and circulating through it.

In the act of walking the streets, it is essential to note a singularity of reemployment at stake here: *It's never nighttime in the map* starts from a type of Google database, a reservoir of images whose frames and movements – direction, duration, rhythm – are built, within the limits of the file, by the body that navigates and films, in this case, the director of the short film. At all times, the manipulation of the map's resources allows us to remember something constitutive: the director navigates through Google and films the routes, adding to the technical images another layer, the body that navigates. It is he who chooses the speed of the images and their duration, the place where we look, which streets we travel, what time of the archive we will access. He “directs” the map, creates a space-time experience from it.

Thus, Carvalho uses, most of the time, the “map camera” itself, but the route, guided by the filmmaker, addresses a set of suspicions to this optical device⁸. The voice-over says: “The map is indifferent, free, the map does not need legs or wings, the map does not walk, fly, or run, does not feel discomfort, has no opinion [...]. The map is an eye devoid of a body.” Carvalho places the prerogative of the map as this disembodied control instrument – which sees everything but feels nothing. He thus conceptualizes the elements that give basis to the figurative economy⁹ of this visibility technology: a disembodied, indifferent eye, with a desire for impersonality, wholeness, and transparency.

Here, the film elaborates one of its proximities with Foucault’s characterizations regarding panopticism, enshrined in *Discipline and punish*. In this “eye devoid of body,” marked by an alleged indifference, we identify elements of that Foucaultian description about the control and surveillance devices of disciplinary societies, imbued with a visibility logic – which is “a trap,” in the author’s words (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 166). Without dwelling here on the machinery of that device, we are interested in the theoretical principle that links a regime of the visible to an operation of power: and following more along this path, it is the notion of “diagram,” unfolded by Deleuze (2005) when reading Foucault, which also offers a way of organization in network, as if by an alliance of vehicles, of the different technical and social machines. Far from the figure of a state apparatus outside the various manifestations of power, these actions are immanently articulated (DELEUZE, 2005, p. 46). Saying even more directly, in the author’s terms: “these relations of forces pass, ‘not over,’ but through the very fabric of the agencies they produce” (DELEUZE, 2005, p. 46).

The emphasis on the diagram interests us, especially, to dimension the ways in which power operates, beyond any centralized or vertical location. We could say that the

⁸ This notion is in line with what Crary (2012) proposes in a study that emphasizes optical devices as an amalgam between “philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic discourses” and “mechanical techniques, institutional requirements, and socioeconomic forces.” The author also says: “More than a material object or an integral part of a history of technology, each of them can be understood by the way it is inserted in a much larger set of events and powers” (CRARY, 2012, p. 17).

⁹ We risk using a term that appears in Brenez’s (1998) discussion about figural analysis in cinema to an even broader field of images: as the author proposes, figurative economics guides the organization of a film, governing the set of relationships between aspects such as image morphology, its formal properties, and the treatment of motives (BRENEZ, 1998, p. 13). On the basis of her argument, one can observe the aspects of a film in a relational perspective, which even implies making contacts between plastic elements of an image and those of common experience. We are here particularly interested in unfolding, in our own way, a double operation from there: internally to the images, a constantly articulating analysis of their formal aspects; with them, a writing that works in the heart of the circulation between the creations of the visible and those of the common world.

elaborations of *It's never nighttime in the map* describe the network of vehicles at play in the social field in a perspective close to a diagrammatic analysis, capable of drawing an immanent association between multiple relations of forces, between the management of the urban fabric and the logic of technical image operations. A sequence of the film is emblematic in that sense. We see a still image of a dirt road where the Google cursor cannot move. At that moment, Carvalho tells us that, in 2011, the map was unable to enter there. In the left corner of the image, there is a timeline of Google itself, through which Carvalho chooses the years he wants to display.

Then, a new image appears, of the same street, by which we know: in 2012, the map could not yet enter there. Then the same street appears again in a still image, with a wagon crossed at the beginning of it: in 2013, one cannot move forward either. After another jump, the image shows the same street completely modified: the wagon gave way to the tractors, a ditch appears in the foreground, and further in the background it is possible to see that the other side of the street was paved. It is now possible to continue with the Google cursor into that path. In the audio: "The map vehicle can now travel this space. Alongside these other vehicles, the vehicles from the new city. Vehicles that open the way for the vehicle on the map. Police vehicles and all other vehicles." Then we see the tracks of the demolition of a small hut where a handwritten sign informs that houses and room are being rented. When only the dirt floor remains, with no addresses, the voice over says: "The city vehicles have passed." They passed without paying any attention to the house, which is no longer there.

The indifference of the look of the map is already a practice of asymmetry and inequality, transversal to each machine of intervention in the urban space. The vehicles, each in their own way, travel the territory with complete disinterest for the lives that inhabit it, for the uses that people make of it, for the memories that are inscribed there. By exposing the connection of the map's vehicle with the other vehicles that appear in the map's images – that of the police and that of the new city –, the film comments on and highlights the statements of these powers, which are constantly under suspicion. "Everyone is equal before the law. Everyone is equal before the map," says the voice over. In the visual field, in an operation of disjunction with the sound field, evidence of the contradiction arises.



Figure 2: Frames from the film *It's never nighttime in the map*.

After discovering his body inside the map, Carvalho will find the body of other people in it: several boys, mostly black, facing a wall, with their hands on their heads, during a police raid; then, unconscious bodies stretched out in the middle of the sidewalk – we do not know if they sleep or if they are dead. Images that look at us, interrogate us, expose the social fracture of our present, and demand a position. However, for the map, they are images like any other. For the map, it *does not matter*.

The question that interests us here is how cinema, when smuggling a set of visualities, endeavors to highlight the articulations they draw with a network of powers, a tangle of lines of force that, in the dynamics of a visual rationality, intend to be invisible. In *It's never nighttime in the map*, the map becomes the paradigmatic overlap to discuss an alliance of vehicles. In *The time between*, we move on to another association between acts of seeing and making cities, but with analytical gestures attentive to the operations of another type of optical machine. The short film reemploys institutional advertising materials for the Porto Maravilha works in Rio de Janeiro¹⁰: 3D projective images that standardize the transformations of a new city and that act in advertising and visualizing a city of progress, future. Undoubtedly, it is not the simple incorporation of the projective images into the film that will highlight their mechanisms. Therefore, one must pay attention to the elements that allow the short film to propose a thought about the operations of these images – and deviating from them.

¹⁰ Regarding the spaces on stage in the two films, there is a figurative trait that also connects them: at a given point in *It's never nighttime in the map*, we can see traces of the works of the Olympic City in Rio de Janeiro. This takes place when the film already assumes a broader connectivity of urban images, moving from the most immediate surroundings of Carvalho's street (the surroundings of Olinda and Recife). Without overemphasizing the figuration of Rio de Janeiro in the image, this coincidence allows us to think about transversalities between social processes in singular regions.

Extracting shapes from the shape

The time between was produced for the Visualismo – Arte, Tecnologia e Cidade¹¹ festival and exhibited at the newly reopened Praça Mauá, after the works of what the City Hall called “revitalization” – the usual name used by agents of this type of urban intervention. We were present during the screening. As we looked at the *A Noite* building, where the film would be shown, we waited for the image to appear when the voices of several women – drummers of the Divino Espírito Santo in the city of Alcântara, in Maranhão – began singing a song: “Play the drums, my drummers, aae, eea / This is the time for God to save.”

In the building, only the lines and windows continued, no image appeared. The sensation – shared by several of those present – was that, in the almost two minutes in which the sound echoed, without the presence of a projected image, that voice, part of the film’s sound composition, came from the ground: from all black women who scream under that floor where we stepped, marked by a history of slavery, next to the Valongo Wharf, the main port of entry for enslaved blacks from Africa¹².



Figure 3: Projection of *The time between* in the *A Noite* building.

¹¹ The event, held on September 11 and 12, 2015 in Rio de Janeiro, had a curatorial team that previously commissioned artists from different places in Brazil to produce audiovisual works especially for the event, already with the information about the location of the city where they would be displayed. *The time between* was therefore designed to be projected in the *A Noite* building, on a huge scale.

¹² Valongo Wharf is a landmark of the successive burials that mark the history of the city. Formerly used as a landing site for enslaved blacks, it was buried in 1843 for the construction of the Imperatriz Wharf, for the landing of the future empress Teresa Cristina. At the beginning of the 20th century, a new burial was carried out with the urban reforms of Pereira Passos. For more information, see Lima, Sene, and Souza (2016).

First of all, a request for listening to the voices. That was what we felt during the projection of *The time between*, on the same stage where the City Hall used its tractors. This listening is a fundamental ally of the project to dismantle the institutional image reemployed by the film. After this time of listening, the film launches us in a set of 3D images that reveal the process of urban transformation. In them, we transit between the surface and the soil strata. Sectional cuts in the earth make us dive towards the underground, where the machines dig, demolish, bury. On the surface, we see the proliferation of cranes in the landscape. Trucks pass the tracks, fast. New avenues appear, as if by a magic operation. In the same step of a sudden instant, overpasses disappear. Projective images are organized according to an arrow of time. To project a new city through images is to rework, in the visible realm, the effect intended and promised in the field of urban enterprises: the city will change, and that will be quick. The idea of the future closely linked to the logic of progress is a matter of speed.

In this sense, a first effect that the film triggers is to slow down. *The time between* imposes another rhythm to these accelerated transformations intended by the institutional video. These are two intervention resources: both a visual change in the time of the actions developed *in the images* and an association, *with (and against) the images*, of the singing of the drummers, which make of their musical compass a way of introducing a rhythmic strangeness – another modulation before those rapid transformations of 3D images.

Thus, a population of hearing revolves and disturbs the speed of seeing. First, then, the voices, which initially sing without the drums. Intense physicality of a song that emerges and extends, expanding a vowel, lengthening a tense, densifying the conjugation of a verb. A section introduces photographs from the time of the construction of the *A Noite* building and the collapse of Morro do Castelo¹³ – and with them, we hear the drums boom for the first time. Then, the war drums present themselves, and they are also physical matter, they are bodies, they are combat.

In the instant of the video where the inhabitants of the new city appear, the short film, in addition to slowing down, starts to interrupt: the flow of the image is thus interdicted, before the residents seen in the projective models appear completely and become people with their outlined shapes.

¹³ Landmark of the foundation of Rio de Janeiro, Morro do Castelo was razed in 1922 by the government's claim about the need for sanitation and modernization of the city. It is worth noting that the hill was a proletarian space, full of old mansions and tenements.



Figure 4: Frame from the film *The time between*.

We are left with only their silhouettes, white. They are ghosts. White. In the audio, the concrete and lively voice of a drummer, resident of Alcântara, in Maranhão, evokes the memory of other ghosts – blacks – who inhabited that region in the process of reorganization.

*I'll set fire to the mill
Where the black people were beaten up
Black people are people like the others
They want to have affection and love
Dance there, black Nago
Dance there, black Nago*

The words refer to an uprising. Listening, side by side with the act of seeing advertising images slowed down and interrupted in their natural course, causes us to think of a multiplicity that one tries to suffocate in social life – and, for that, it is necessary to interrupt the univocal, interfere with the rhythms of the bulldozers, vehicles, tractors, projective images. One must break the course of continuity and of the project and focus on the apparently inexorable movement of the transformations conceived in this alliance between state and capital.

It is a disassembly that takes language to its limit, removes the shape of stability and allows an endless number of erased and silenced experiences to emerge, to overflow. As Regina Benevides and Eduardo Passos (2015) have already said in another context, it is about operating within a politics of narrativity, which dismantles the shapes, promoting the “extraction of minority experiences that, in the symptom,

appear as a compact block” (BENEVIDES; PASSOS, 2015, p. 163). We could say that it is a gesture both discursive and plastic, involving the field of statements and visibility regimes. In other words, we could say that a disassembly is accompanied by a set of reassembly gestures: from there, what was extracted returns to the world. It is this return work that Georges Didi-Huberman (2010) highlights in Harun Farocki’s researches: “Farocki definitely subscribed to the fact that *images are a common good*” (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2010, p. 163). From this fundamental political observation, Farocki’s cinema extracted an obsession with the act of appropriating images from the most different power institutions (prisons, companies, armies, for example). He did this to return them to the world in other ways, already loaded with transgressive effects, contained in readings of historical experience, of the operations of power, of the strategies of seeing.

Returning to the Brazilian films that question us here, we could say that the political effects of the reemployments they elaborate are situated in the constant action of disassembling, reassembling, and returning. They dispute the making of cities by using images that wish to appropriate the imagination and the destinations of the urban space. The stop, underline, and cut operations mobilized by the short films invite the viewer to dissent with the projects of the reemployed images, returning the work of the imagination to the world as a common good.

In *The time between*, a new effect appears, in the final sequence, when projective images promote a jump between public and private space. Through a sudden gesture, an eye without a body – to resume the theoretical figure of *It’s never nighttime in the map* – throws the viewer into the home of a family, which can be seen in a happy and bright living room. In the project conceived by those images, a building window can be quickly crossed, to generate the perfect continuity between the management of the urban space and the harmony of a family nucleus. There is represented a Brazilian family formed by a heterosexual couple, a daughter and a son, sitting in the living room watching TV and eating popcorn.

This visual – and subjective – project is immediately tensioned by *The time between* from a gesture based on failure and stuttering. The moment this image appears, the drummers’ voices cease, and the film plunges into complete silence. From there, some *frames* begin to repeat themselves, as if the image were stuck and could not move forward. The action of the characters on the scene begins to acquire a comicality by the ridiculous, when the boy, for example – by excessively repeating the act of putting the popcorn in his mouth – seems to be punching his own face.

The repetition refers to the film *Passage à l'acte* (1993), by Martin Arnold, which proposes the same operation of excessive repetition during the breakfast of a white family, transforming it into a nightmare. This operation exposes the cinematographic apparatus, and the artificiality of the image refers to the artificiality of the situation. In Arnold's film, a few seconds of Robert Mulligan's feature film *To kill a mockingbird* (1962), transforms itself into just over 11 minutes. The procedure also plays with the extension of frames, going back to minimum moments, repeating a moment, making the gestures aberrant. In Arnold's research, constantly focused on classic Hollywood films, the filmmaker seeks to perceive something that was kept in a type of image unconscious. It is as if the filmmaker were examining the fraction of a second where an infinite number of cultural processes have condensed, leading this moment to paroxysm. The gesture of pointing the place to sit, coming from the father, becomes the evidence of an authoritarianism, which traces the positions established for each one around a table. Even in the case of these director's films, sound engineering is central, as in the excessive repetition of the noise of the door that the boy from the family scene knocks on his back.

Concerning Arnold's film, *The time between* has a fundamental singularity, which falls precisely in the choice of silence. Throughout the film, this is the only moment when the sound stops. We observe this family nucleus in its silence, in its eternal repetition, until a completely pixelated screen filling, which leaves us on the verge of abstraction. Another fundamental difference compared to Arnold: in the short film by Firmeza and Benevides, the picture of the original images is intensely violated, through mechanisms of singularization and detail. With a zoom in on the bodies and faces of each member of the family, we make restless passages between the people that inhabit that living room. At the end, we have an enlargement of the details of a head, going from the face to the ear, and from there until a yellowish, misshapen blur.

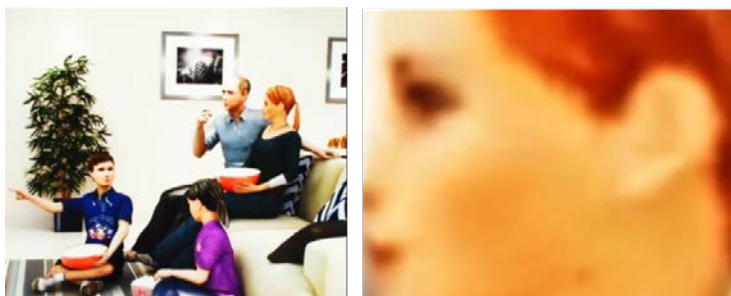


Figure 5: Frames from the film *The time between*.

In making these stutters using an electronic model, which points to an image that exists to sell a desired future, *The time between* produces a *failure*, a *collapse* in that image. Here, it is not only the image that collapses, it is the project to whiten and “revitalize” the city, against which the film offers the sound of black drums and voices that sing and play with an insurgent force. If the film started without an image – although this consideration of “without an image” may be complexified, in some ways –, the image without sound creates a rhyme that takes us directly back to the beginning, in a circularity. Against the city building operations that draw a straight line towards the future, the film proposes a return that makes time lose its temper, evoking spectral forces to face such operations, tracing an insurgent history that emerges against the background from excavations made by vehicles of the new city.

If the images of the 3D models follow the speed of the tractors – arm in arm with removals, erasures, and silences –, reemploying them according to the tuning fork of a critical act implies subtracting them from their continuity, extracting elements that sustain them materially, and showing what is astonishing about them¹⁴. In different ways, both *It's never nighttime in the map* and *The time between* propose that the reemployment of hegemonic visual logics (the map and projective images) can come together with an *extraction* procedure: both extract multiple shapes, branched and differentiated, from the univocal shape of city management technologies. This gesture of extracting, as suggested by *The time between*, can be composed of many others: slowing down, interrupting, and stuttering are some of them, agents of a rhythmic stylistic of erasure.

Intervening in time

In an article about two films that address the work of ruins, Cláudia Mesquita (2019)¹⁵ offers a reading of two fundamental concepts in the constellation

¹⁴ It is worth mentioning that an image coinciding with *The time between* is taken up by another film, *O porto* [The port] (2013), by Clarissa Campolina, Julia De Simone, Luiz Pretti, and Ricardo Pretti: a rendering from the City Hall that shows what the port region would look like after the demolition of the Perimetral overpass. In the sound, an experimental song echoes guttural screams over this image, which is intended to be soft, giving it despair. Before and after this video, other images, taken by the film crew, come closer, creating new displacements. They are images of the spaces under construction, emptied of people, occupied with tractors and rubble. An apparatus over the lens blurs these images of the present region against the sharpness of the future promised by the image of the City Hall, in addition to focusing on the excavations of Valongo Wharf. “In a kind of inside out of futurism, the film makes this exclamation a terror that falls on the city, linked to this circle of time. When revolving what was buried – a past that emerges from archaeological excavations and a virtualized future in the City Hall video – what appears in the film is astonishment. Astonishment that travels through the different layers of land and time” (PORTUGAL, 2014).

¹⁵ The author discusses the feature films *La guerre est proche* (The war is near, 2011), by Claire Angelini, and *Pays barbare* (Barbaric country, 2013), by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. As described by Mesquita (2019, p. 202), the two films deal with different ways of thinking “the elaboration of traumatic past events from ruins.”

of Benjamin's thoughts. Comparing texts by Benjamin himself and the author's readers, she distinguishes notions of ruins and rubble. If, on the one hand, ruins are capable of mobilizing inquiries about the various forms of incidence of the past in the present, albeit in a gap and interval way, rubble points to a mutation of the remains and the impossibility of reconstructing something from history. Mesquita proposes: "A work of elaboration based on ruins would then imply subtracting the remains from their muteness of rubble, collecting them, assembling them, and, to some extent, vocalizing them, reintegrating the ruins into history when they are assembled" (MESQUITA, 2019, p. 206).

We could consider the sound that inhabits *The time between* as a fundamental layer to plot a dense historical and political writing along with the reemployed images. If there is an excavation here, an archaeological gesture, it takes place in a completely different way from the operations of the machines that appear in the projection models of the new city. Using 3D images, in connection with archival photographs and the voices of the drummers, the film creates a complex shuffle between historical times. Joining the two ends of a process displaced in almost a century, it generates a circularity in time that visually gives rise to the figure of a *blank slate*, a desire for urban projects that translates into practices always focused on an obsession with novelty, with the aim to interfere in the history of a city, in the configurations of its landscape. As Clarissa da Costa Moreira (2005) says, there is a double meaning of blank slate, both as a break with previous states and as a white canvas ready to be filled. Making the city a blank slate becomes a way of constant management of modern urban reform projects, aimed at destroying pieces of the urban space or creating completely new cities.

It would be the intention to transform the city and to create something "new," to decide on its present and its future (and also on its past), and, for that, sometimes to destroy parts or, at its peak, destroy it completely or abandon it, and make a new city or new parts of it. (MOREIRA, 2005, p. 18)

In this sense, we could say that one of the roles of projective images is to make this erasure even more radical, so that it can happen without the possibility of remains, without the emergence of the traces, without any possible relationship with the ruins produced by the destruction. To counter this line, one must make the images clean, neutral, and transparent and include them in a network with the remains they want to hide. In the archives brought to *The time between*, between the beginning of the 20th century and the 21st century, we are faced with recurrent

interventions in historical periods: in the midst of this, the film seeks to create the situation for the emergence of silenced worlds. The drummers are voices that follow their song and that insist – voices, bodies, and memories that already resist, before the film –, and with which one seeks to weave possible ways of alliance.

In a way, we could say that the singing of the drummers is inserted here as the filming of the present of this film, made predominantly by reemployment of the images taken by others. We know that the registration of these voices in *The time between* unfolds a previous research in which the two directors participated. In the film *Nada é* (Nothing is, 2014)¹⁶, the encounter with the Alcântara drummers, at the Divino festival, allowed an interpolation of times, combining the historical experience of an imperial Brazil, the ritualized manifestations, the memories of slavery, and the projects of future for that city, with the construction of a base for launching rockets into outer space. We also know, through research developed by Marise Glória Barbosa (2015), that the women who sing at the Divino festival in Alcântara are mainly from *quilombola* communities in the region. In addition, as the author points out, the area of the Alcântara Rocket Launching Base was demarcated by expelling and relocating a good part of these communities, forced to leave “the area where they have lived since the formation of *quilombos*” (BARBOSA, 2015, p. 43).

By bringing the singing of the drummers – figures forcibly removed from their spaces – *The time between*, therefore, creates a gesture that has intense consequences to face the rubble built by projective images. The songs, as we highlighted, are evocative, in their own words, of a radical refractoriness before the Brazilian historical experience, in the past and in the present, of constitutive fractures and inequalities. The montage then becomes a procedure to promote listening and echo these voices, from the first minutes of the film: listening to the singing and everything it carries in the middle of the city, a space that is marked by the memory of slavery and the violent removals that took place in the construction process of the current Porto Maravilha. The film elaborates an aesthetic-political circumstance in which the contact between the songs and the images causes a mismatch in time – both in historical aspects and in, as it is said in terms of musical language, a matter of cadence, of movements. The mismatch between voices and images goes through durations, through rhythms. Once again, a sensitive tension that could bend the time arrow of projects, runs through a question of speed.

¹⁶ *Nothing is* was directed by Firmeza and edited by Benevides. The title refers to a comment heard by the director from a resident of Alcântara: “Here *nothing is*, everything was or will be.”

Final remarks

The operations of *It's never nighttime in the map* and *The time between*, in their peculiarities, lead us to think about the erasure processes promoted by certain visual configurations, allied to urban management activities. To a large extent, a gesture made by the two films consists of collecting the remains left by tractors, bulldozers, and seeing machines, to elaborate a thought around what is constantly buried and exterminated – the lives run over, the bodies that are targets of violence police, the city parts that are suddenly cut from the landscape.

In their work of destruction, the visual machines confronted by the films conceive specific temporal perspectives. If the map goes together with vehicles that erase the marks of the past and the present, the projective images promote both the burial of the past and the projection of a future decided by few – thus creating the imagery of a city generated according to the uniqueness and the annihilation of differences.

Given these ways of seeing and making cities, *It's never nighttime in the map* and *The time between* offer different tactics of reemployment and appropriation of the logic of the visible, to comment on them, criticize them, undo them. They are essays that outline a study and a different *work* of visual representations of the city. Describing and studying these logics are the challenges of a critical task of images. Carefully examining the operation of power, in its figurative economy, becomes an iconographic, theoretical, and productive weapon in these contemporary Brazilian films.

Our analytical and conceptual gesture seeks to take cinema as an interlocutor, capable of interrogating our experience of the present and the multiple power relations that make up social life. It is a method that insists on the singularities of formal operations of very concise short films while taking their questions as powerful theoretical articulations to think about broad questions, in close dialogue with other conceptual formulations.

The work of the films engages us, above all, to think about the gesture of claiming images as materials that can be appropriated, put in crisis, and returned to the world to formulate different ways of seeing and living. The composition of political life goes through a necessary dispute in the field of the visible. The alliance between vehicles, reiterated by *It's never nighttime in the map*, offers us a pedagogy: power strategies are coextensive to various spheres of social life – including the production of images.

Thus, we seek to emphasize the commitment to, at the same time, diagnose the logics inherent in technical images, in their articulation with social machines, and constitute a unique path for images – so that one can effectively *imagine* and *image* another city, quite different from that planned by state and capital, which branch out their projects based on particular forms of organization, at certain speeds, scales, and luminosities, in all spheres of life. Taking part in this dispute becomes a fundamental political task of our time and a front for an entire work of political imagination.

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