

Community Communication and Spatial Justice: Insurgent Practices in Rio de Janeiro Favelas

Lou G. L Caffagni; Gizele Martins

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,
loucaf@gmail.com; gizeleomartins@gmail.com, <https://leccufrj.wordpress.com/>

Abstract: The article investigates the Maré Mobilisation Front, a community communication collective in Rio de Janeiro that mobilised during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their actions resulted in protests for public policies, and they expanded their scope from local issues to a collaboration with other social movements. This evolution culminated in the formation of a national coalition of community communication collectives, uniting diverse groups through traditional and digital media. Adopting a neo-Marxist approach, the study examines concepts like Spatial Justice and the Right to the City through participatory research, including observation and interviews. The analysis of this case contributes to understanding communication's capacity to articulate the different struggles for the Right to the City, bringing social movements together on a shared ground.

Keywords: community communication; urban activism; spatial justice; right to the city; COVID-19

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1. Introduction

In this paper, we analyse the mobilisation and self-organisation of Rio de Janeiro's favela residents during the COVID-19 crisis. These impoverished territories in Rio de Janeiro have a long history of discrimination and oppression, concentrating various forms of exclusion and violence. Historically, favela residents have been part of the working class, making significant contributions to the construction of Brazilian cities. However, they are often excluded from urban spaces, services, and resources. They live in a constant state of exception characterised, on one hand, by state absence in the most basic services and, on another hand, by the presence of state repression and police-driven violence (Poets 2015). Favelas are subject to a triple exclusion process: racial, spatial, and economic (Sant'Anna 2024). The geographical peculiarities of favelas have exacerbated sanitary and economic crises during the pandemic (Fleury and Menezes 2020). To resist and survive, favela residents organised themselves and mobilised a public demonstration to press public institutions to take action.

Our research addresses a key theoretical question: How can communication enable heterogeneous coalitions to organise for the Right to the City (RttC) and for the transformation of capitalist social relations and other forms of domination/exploitation? The study will examine this dynamic in a digital era where Information and Communication Technologies are altering the typical urban spatial relations. Drawing on works from Harvey, Negri, and Hardt (2009), who argue for a link between

revolutionary action and the production of urban commons, this paper analyses the capacity of peripheral social movements to creatively appropriate space and communication. The central problem this paper addresses is how communication can assist in articulating a multitude of social movements on a common ground without losing their specificities. This is crucial because, as Harvey states, "articulation and parallelism between these struggles are not automatic but have to be achieved" (Harvey, Hardt, and Negri 2009)

Our analysis is based on the concepts of the Right to the City (RttC) and Spatial Justice, as developed by Henri Lefebvre (1972, 1991), David Harvey (1981, 2000, 2012), and Edward Soja (2000, 2010). The concept of the RttC refers to a way of relating to urban space that subverts the fragmentation and privatisation of capitalist space, transforming the use value of the city into exchange value. For Lefebvre, the urban is characterised by centrality (of power, decisions, communication, work) and the gathering and simultaneity of social relations. It is the modern form of occupation and appropriation of space. The urban is not limited to the city because it transforms all social space. In Brazil, for example, the monoculture of soybeans is, on the one hand, a consequence of decisions centralised in urban space and, on the other, one of the places where surplus value is extracted to build cities. Capitalist cities are built on spatial privatisation and segregation that transforms dwelling into habitat. To dwell (*Habiter*) means to appropriate, to produce space based on its use value. Habitat, in contrast, is the capitalist form of occupying space, derived from the commodification of space, the fragmentation of the urban into regions for housing, work, leisure, etc.

According to Harvey (2000), the capitalist production of the city operates a double spatial fix: it absorbs and fixes the capital extracted from workers in the relations of production while also helping to resolve the crises inherent in the functioning of capital. Similarly, urban investments both support the extraction and realisation of the cycle of production and expropriation; and commercialise and privatise common space, fragmenting and degrading social relations.

According to Marxist theory (Pinto 2020), humans produce themselves through work, which consists of the appropriation and humanisation of nature. Urban space is produced through work and, in this sense, is, or can be, a form of realisation and concretisation of humanity through the appropriation of natural space. Nevertheless, by separating the production of space from its use and transforming space into a commodity, capital alienates the urban dwellers from their work (Lefebvre 1972). The "spatial turn" (Soja 2000, 2010) consists of reinterpreting dialectics in the light of spatial and urban relations. Marx prioritised the concept of time in his work, but according to Harvey and Lefebvre, it is necessary to consider the role of space in social, economic, and cultural production, reproduction, and revolution itself. Building on Edward Soja's (2000, 2010) concept of a "triple dialectic", this paper explores how time, space, and society interweave to shape both exploitation and resistance. We will articulate the specific interplay of spatiality, history, and social communication within Rio de Janeiro's favelas to offer a comprehensive view of the ongoing process.

The struggle for the RttC and for Spatial Justice is not the same as the struggle for rights in a capitalist society, although these struggles are related. The RttC consists of establishing another relationship between the producers and their work, restoring a commons degraded by capitalist relations. New information technologies operate similarly in the communicative dimension of social existence, decisively modifying urban, temporal, and social relations. The simultaneity and centrality, essential attributes of the urban, are de-territorialised in an unprecedented way. Urban centres seem to communicate in a decentralised manner when, in fact, they operate an even

more radical centralisation, as all information flows pass through enormous servers whose ownership is increasingly concentrated. The monopoly over the means of communication and new social media also operates a degradation of social and spatial relations (Sodré 2019). Our hypothesis is that spatial and communicational justice must be articulated dialectically, and that the different forms of struggle and resistance can only gain consistency to the extent that they articulate a series of diverse struggles. It is at this point that Soja's work is most important to us. Unlike the other authors, Soja studies the forms of coalition of urban and non-urban social movements, shifting the centrality of the struggle from the working class to a multitude of heterogeneous struggles.

According to Soja (2010), urban space reproduces, sustains, and exacerbates various forms of social injustice. The emergence of favelas is intrinsically linked to this geohistorical process. In Rio de Janeiro, both the state and capital have consistently neglected investments in popular housing for people of colour and low-income populations, instead prioritising the construction of infrastructure aimed at the expansion and reproduction of capital. This approach has further deepened social inequalities (Faulhaber and Siqueira 2019). Since the 1940s, the historical process of capital accumulation has favoured investments in middle-class and affluent neighbourhoods, which are seen as capable of generating sustainable and long-term profits (Ribeiro 2015). Ironically, favelas were largely constructed by their own residents, who played a significant role in building much of the city (Campos 2010). The state has historically been absent from these spaces, and the rights of favela residents to basic services and effective citizenship have been systematically denied (Martins, 2020). Consequently, favela residents have been compelled to self-organise and advocate for their rights in order to survive. While favelas represent a less rigid form of racial segregation compared to South African apartheid or Palestinian settlements in Jordan, they are not necessarily less oppressive in their social and economic outcomes. On the production of segregated spaces, Soja asserts (2010, 55):

“Segregation, like the erosion of public space, seems initially to be a fundamental feature of the production and urbanization of (in)justice, and hence a principal target in justice struggles, and at different times and places this is certainly the case.”

While traditional Marxism advocates for the transformation of modes of production through the seizure of power by a revolutionary party, socialising wealth and political power through a revolutionary process, more recent theories (Young 1990; Soja 2010; Harvey 2001, 2012; Lefebvre 1972; 1991) rely on the communicative capacity of diverse minorities to build a democratic space capable of addressing social injustices at various levels – economic, racial, communicative, spatial, political, and so on. This approach recognises, beyond class exploitation, a set of injustices linked to race, gender, culture, ethnicity, and environmental forms of exploitation and oppression, which may or may not revolve around class domination.

Brazilian's Community Communication theory offers a set of concepts and tools for thinking about social movements and their struggles. Paiva (2003) and Sodré (2019) assert that capitalist society has deteriorated communitarian relations and organic communicative processes. Excluded groups cannot recognise themselves nor communicate their desires with each other. Thus, the solidarity network that defines communities is deprived of their inherent substance. The primary goal of Community Communication, in this regard, is to rebuild a common space through a grassroots-

based communication process. Our argument is that community communication plays an essential role in mobilising and organising the different kinds of struggles for Spatial Justice. In the postmetropolis (Soja 2000), virtual and urban spaces are entangled. Thus, we argue, the RttC involves constructing a common space for the differences to express themselves in concrete and digital spaces.

2. Methodological Approach

The study's data on favela mobilisation was collected through participant observation and interviews, employing a Community-Based Participatory Research approach. Influenced by the field of Digital Humanities of the Global South (Rendón and Morales 2024), our methodology was deeply rooted in the active involvement of the authors within the Maré community. This partnership with the Frente Maré collective ensured the research was conducted in collaboration with, and focused on the interests of, the group. As a co-author and a leader of community communication collectives in Maré, Gizele Martins was instrumental to this process. A core principle of this research is to decolonise the relationship between academia and social movements, integrating the epistemologies developed at the margins of society into formal science. Ultimately, we aim to equip the studied collectives with tactical tools to transform their urban space and communicative relationships.

The restrictions imposed by the pandemic and its unpredictable nature made it impossible to plan or execute scientific and ethnographic research on this subject in advance. The reports and interviews were made after the pandemic, and the data was compiled to support and inform the actions of *Frente Maré*. Our research methodology also encompassed participative observations in meetings and digital events; reports on the process of producing communication materials; and detailed notes about the coordination of financial and human resources. Frente Maré played a pivotal role in compiling a dataset containing information related to COVID-19 cases, medical resources, and socio-economic indicators. Members of Frente Maré organised multiple Excel spreadsheets with layered data, including information gathered from each residence they visited. Following the communication campaign, numerous residents sought support. Subsequently, members of the collective reached out to these residents and recorded their information.

The leadership of Frente Maré established connections with community leaders across other favelas, enabling the exchange of information on resistance strategies and disease control measures. Given the constraints of isolation and quarantine policies, communication and information sharing occurred primarily through messaging applications and social media networks. These communications formed an integral part of our participant observation process and were conducted with the explicit post-facto authorisation and consent of key participants.

3. Favelas: The Historic Production of Unjust Spaces

The geography of Rio de Janeiro is rife with inequalities. Favelas and upper-class neighbourhoods are scattered throughout the city. With just a quick glance, one can see the Copacabana Palace, a high-end hotel, juxtaposed with Cantagalo Favela. Luxurious condominiums and makeshift wooden shacks are separated by concrete walls, barbed wire, surveillance cameras, and guardhouses. The entrances of favelas are often occupied by military units, armed police officers, machine gunners, and armoured vehicles. Between 2014 and 2016, Rio de Janeiro has hosted two international sport events (FIFA World Cup and Olympics). On the occasion of these events, physical barriers were installed in one of the main avenues of the city (Linha

Vermelha) that connect the north of the city with the central and South zones (where the richest and most affluent neighbourhoods are located), and where criminal assaults are relatively frequent. This barrier aims to segregate and hide Maré's favela from tourists (Medrado; Cabal and Souza 2020). The criminalisation of favelas is deeply intertwined with the discourse propagated in mainstream media, public policies (Martins 2020), and a necropolitical culture of public security (Ribeiro 2021). ICT plays a pivotal role in military operations in favelas, providing security forces with intelligence on residents, social movements, traffic flow, and criminal cartels (Rekow 2015), organising a kind of digital dispositif of governmentality (Rendón and Morales 2024). The majority of residents of favelas are people of colour, Blacks, Indigenous, and immigrants. Racialised spaces are a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including media discourse, public policies, and geographical features (Soja 2010). As Steven Tuttle (2022) posits, racialised spaces involve several factors, such as media imagery and political ideologies, that shape the uses and perceptions of space. These factors determine where individuals may or may not go and influence expectations of treatment in certain places. In this regard, public policies and social actions can modify the conditions of space production, thereby reshaping space. Through solidarity, they offer a terrain for racialised communities to resist oppression.

The absence of state interventions and support has compelled favela residents to engage in various forms of self-organisation. Resident associations serve as representatives of the community in dealings with government agencies, mobilising efforts to secure the population's RttC. In favelas, access to basic public services is often a result of collective achievements. The historical mobilisation of favela residents has achieved some success. The struggle for rights has resulted in improvements in several areas of public services, such as education and healthcare. However, the absence of government intervention is evident, as public power still prioritises financial capital and the wealthiest areas. Despite the government's efforts to build schools, investment in maintenance and social programmes remains insufficient. As Young states, facing segregation and exclusion, communities often rely on self-organisation strategies to defend their rights:

“The power of this assimilationist ideal has inspired the struggle of oppressed groups and their supporters against the exclusion and denigration of these groups, and continues to inspire many. Periodically in American history, however, movements of the oppressed have questioned and rejected this ‘path to belonging’ (Karst 1986). Instead, they have seen self-organization and the assertion of a positive group cultural identity as a better strategy for achieving power and participation in dominant institutions. Recent decades have witnessed a resurgence of this ‘politics of difference’, not only among racial and ethnic groups, but also among women, gay men and lesbians, old people, and the disabled” (Young 1990, 161).

The state is primarily present through repressive apparatuses, contributing to an informal and non-normative form of segregation, as a member of Frente Maré's says:

“The only public policies that have a significant impact on Maré are those related to security. Police operations have become routine, hindering the movement of workers in the community and making it impossible for health centres and schools to operate. These actions also risk the lives of patients and students, cause

material damage to residents whose cars are destroyed and homes invaded, and perpetuate the necropolitics practiced in our territory”.

To substantiate the current struggles for Spatial Justice in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, we need to gain a better understanding of the historical production of these spaces. Most of the city of Rio de Janeiro was originally established during the period of slavery. Many enslaved individuals managed to escape captivity and sought refuge in settlements, known in Brazil as *quilombos* (Campos 2010; Gomes 2006). Thus, the production of urban space in Rio de Janeiro was directly linked to mercantile capitalism and slavery. After the abolition of slavery (1888), the surplus of Black workers became an “urban problem”. Suddenly, people of colour, who had been integral to the base of production and reproduction, became an “undesirable” workforce. It can be argued that public policies towards Black people in Brazil have consistently aimed, directly or indirectly, to neutralise or eliminate their presence in the public sphere (Sodré 2023). Favelas were the unexpected and organic solution, rooted in the lack of capacity and political interest of the state to intervene.

The first favelas in Brazil appeared in Rio de Janeiro in the late nineteenth century, when it was the country’s capital, in the final years of slavery, when the number of freed Black populations was rising significantly (Algranti 1998), despite the high mortality of this sector of the population due to communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis (Pereira 2016). Favelas emerged from the prohibition and repression of *cortiços* (community tenement houses similar to slums) that sheltered poor families and freed Black individuals in the downtown area. As these spaces occupied central areas with high-priced lands, real estate speculators put pressure on the government to dismantle these buildings, many of them constructed without the proper authorisation, to re-urbanise these areas and to invest the capital accumulated with the plantations. This process confirms the arguments of Harvey (2001) about the relationship between surplus capital and speculative investment, pointing out the unjust allocation of resources in the production of urban space. Social injustice and the struggle for the RttC are inherent parts of the geohistory of favelas, because, as Lefebvre (2000, 22) says:

“the inevitable crisis of urban centers established on segregation and establishment: center of decision-making, the wealth, power, of information, knowledge, that expel out to periphery everyone that do not participate in political privileges” (translated from French to English by the authors)

4. The Mobilisation of Community Communication Collectives During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, misinformation and fake news were the primary issues addressed by community communication collectives (Paiva and Martins 2023). The former president, Jair Bolsonaro, and the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Wilson Witzel, both representatives of far-right parties, shared and disseminated several fake news and conspiracy theories about the virus through a complex system of digital communication that utilised WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook. They attacked national and international healthcare organisations, claiming that the pandemic was a lie aimed at destabilising Western governments.

To combat disinformation, community leaders of Favela da Maré scheduled a meeting to develop a communication plan. The first challenge faced by this collective was the communication habits of the population. As V .B., a member of Frente Maré,

says, “The collective emerged in March 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Community communicators were initially concerned with providing information on hygiene measures to stay safe from the virus and combat fake news”.

According to the Reuters Digital News Report (Newman et al. 2022), the majority of Brazilians rely on social media for information. There is a generalised distrust of traditional media and professional journalism. The strategy of financing mass diffusion of fake news on social media adopted by Bolsonaro and his followers was effective and especially challenging to combat, because many social media users were trapped in an echo chamber of fake news (Nguyen 2020; Del Vicario et al. 2016; Bruns 2019), and the Maré collective had to devise creative ways to communicate with them.

The group joined forces to combat the virus and fill the void left by the absence of government intervention. The plan was designed to support 140,000 residents distributed across sixteen districts of the Maré complex. In addition to the challenges posed by the structure of social media, the group had to address other communication problems, such as limited internet access and the presence of many semi-literate, illiterate, or visually impaired individuals.

The campaign began the following day, on 19 March. The aim of *Frente Maré* was to raise awareness about the virus and educate the population on how to protect themselves. They emphasised the importance of personal hygiene, sanitising homes, and promoting social isolation. A community leader of Favela da Maré said, “The initial initiatives focused on explaining how to use alcohol and masks for protection, and how to maintain social isolation and distancing, taking into account the specific challenges of homes that often lacked proper ventilation”.

To reach residents without Internet access or those who couldn’t read, they mobilised sound cars and, to reach the typical narrow streets of the favelas, they assembled “sound bicycles”. They also distributed flyers with information and instructions. The announcements aimed to counteract the spread of fake news and had to be continually updated to address new pieces of misinformation. The communication content had to be adapted to suit the audience. Furthermore, they maintained an ongoing communication campaign via Facebook and WhatsApp. In this strategy “social and technical networks are amalgamating to form hybrid organizational models that shape and facilitate collective action” (Rekow 2015, 119-120). To ensure the reliability of their information, they collaborated with the Fiocruz Institute, an internationally renowned healthcare research centre, to support the composition of their announcements.

However, the collective faced additional challenges in their pursuit of their goals. *First*, the residents did not have access to hygienic or cleaning products, or even food to nourish their families. So, Frente Maré initiated a fundraising campaign to finance emergency kits to be distributed among residents. A representative of the movement asserts, “Due to the entire situation, we sought support from various sources, including online fundraisers, public notices, and requests to companies, political mandates, third-sector groups, and all kinds of donations from local businesses in the Favela”. These kits included essential items such as water, sanitary masks, hand sanitiser, food, and cleaning products.

Second, for the effective distribution of these kits, it was critical to create a database containing information about the residents in need. This involved collecting data on the number of families, identifying risk groups, people with comorbidities, families without any source of income, and people with special needs. The collective distributed 4,500 kits per month between 2020 and 2021, prioritising those who were unemployed, vulnerable, and at health risk. Additionally, they compiled a map highlighting critical

zones within the favelas to guide the distribution campaign of sanitary, medical, and food products.

Third, the collective had to adapt the instructions from the World Health Organization and Fiocruz for combating the virus to the unique geography of the favelas. During this period, the Maré complex suffered from an inconsistency of water supply. Without a reliable water supply, the instructions from government agencies were compromised. Another issue was the peculiar housing arrangements in the favelas. Many homes are occupied by multiple family units which make following quarantine procedures practically impossible. The economic profile of favela workers presented additional challenges to the campaign. Many favela residents were either unemployed or engaged in informal jobs, often in street vending and informal commerce. The isolation policy exacerbated the situation for families without the means to purchase food, pay their electrical bills, or buy medicines. Furthermore, the austerity policies of the federal government during Bolsonaro's term increased the number of impoverished and destitute families. In this context, food insecurity grew exponentially (Sordi 2023). To combat food insecurity, the Frente Maré collective established a community kitchen. They prepared donated food and distributed it to residents, “delivering breakfast to those leaving for work at dawn and providing 200 to 300 meals per week” (MV, a member of Frente Maré)¹.

Fourthly, pre-existing security issues escalated after 2020. The state military police, commanded by Governor Witzel – who was elected on the promise of killing drug dealers and criminals in favelas with headshots (Pennafort, 2018) – intensified its operations from the beginning of his mandate (Flauzina and Pires 2020), increasing homicide committed by state forces (Hirata, Grillo, and Dirk 2020). The field oversight of these operations by the Public Prosecution Service was limited by isolation policies. As a result, residents of favelas lived in fear, not only of the virus but also of the unrestrained and violent police actions and the pervasive food insecurity.

The Maré complex is under the control of a web of parallel forces, with different areas being disputed by various criminal and non-criminal groups. The sovereignty of these marginalised spaces obeys intricate and complex dynamics. During the pandemic, the delicate equilibrium among these forces underwent significant changes, as noted by Davis and Hilgers (2022). To reach all regions, community leaders had to negotiate with various criminal and formal favela forces. A collective could only operate within a criminal territory if they had informal permission to do so. In one of these areas controlled by drug dealers, initially, the dissemination of announcements and the product's distribution were prohibited. However, as the pandemic progressed, due to community insistence and negotiation, the criminal organisation eventually agreed to open the territory to Frente Maré. In this regard, as states JB, a member of Frente Maré:

“Knowledge of the territory is crucial, as it helps us determine the best location for an action and is vital for our safety in the event of a shootout. In addition to the risk of police operations, our area is dominated by two rival gangs. Moreover, the characteristic resourcefulness and persuasive power of those who live in the favela were, and continue to be, essential tools in our work”.

¹ This number also accounts for lunches distributed at [noon](#).

5. From the Favelas toward a Coalition for Spatial Justice

Community communication groups in different favelas have a history of collective trans-communitarian mobilisation. Different groups organised themselves to undertake similar work within their communities. As the pandemic aggravated itself, a number of peripheral collectives of Rio de Janeiro joined forces to amplify their actions and advocate for their rights. This organisational effort extended to many areas in the city, including Cidade de Deus, Acari, Complexo do Alemão, Complexo da Penha, Morro do Preventório, Morro da Providência, and Rocinha. Mobilisation was facilitated through social media and messenger apps. Many of the leaders were acquainted with each other due to previous activist endeavours. Communication between different favelas and collectives was instrumental in developing creative and effective solutions to common problems faced by marginalised areas of the city. During the pandemic, these community communication collectives expanded beyond their traditional roles, evolving into a multi-layered organisation that played various roles in spatial and social organisation. Raquel Paiva and Gizele Martins (2023, 108) posit that:

“Community communication is characterised by an understanding of communication as an inherently transformative force, which requires, to become operative, an understanding of basic procedures, from the production of narratives to the access to the means of message production, in order to be effective” (Translated from Portuguese to English by the authors]

The various fronts joined forces to mobilise legal and political actions to draw the attention of the public sphere and the government to the reality of favelas. They subscribed to public funding calls made by Fiocruz to raise financial resources for their initiatives, reached out to public authorities, political parties, representatives, NGOs, journalists, researchers, and published the data gathered during the pandemic to activate a vast network, producing and disseminating knowledge.

In July of 2021, as the number of deaths and infections spiralled out of control, the situation became untenable. The collective efforts of various groups were insufficient to manage the public health crisis. Collectives from different favelas came together to organise a common protest in front of City Hall, in the downtown region. Making this decision was extremely challenging, as the activists had diligently supported social isolation policies and now had to defy them, facing the repressive state forces, because lives in their community were already at risk, with people dying due to both police violence and COVID-19. More than five hundred protesters came together to fight for the rights of marginalised communities. People all over the city held up posters denouncing the mounting death toll, police interventions, and food insecurity.

The manifestation “No hunger, no bullets, no COVID” resonated in various mainstream and community media outlets in Rio de Janeiro and across the country (Lacerda 2021; Diário do Centro do Mundo 2021). However, municipal and federal government representatives did not respond to the demands of favela residents. Nevertheless, the demonstrations captured the attention of public sphere sectors and other autonomous government institutions, such as Fiocruz, the Public Ministry, and the Supreme Court. Similar protests were carried out in other cities, and the Public Ministry initiated investigations, while civil organisations made donations to support the cause.

The biggest achievement was the mobilisation of the Public Ministry, Supreme Court, and other civil organisations to regulate and reduce police interventions in favelas during the pandemic. Social movements had argued that state interventions in

favelas should prioritise preserving lives amidst the sanitary crisis and avoid exacerbating it with police violence. The mobilisation resulted in the organisation of a historical juridical decision, known as the ADPF² of Favelas, that regulated police operations in these territories during the pandemic. Unfortunately, as in “such situations, whoever has more power will decide which right is enforced” (Marx 2024, 207), violent police operations didn’t cease. M. V., a member of Frente Maré, said, “The ADPF was violated a number of times, not only putting our lives at risk but also making the vaccination process difficult” as it is very dangerous to move within favelas during police operations.

Concomitantly, a WhatsApp group was created with leaders from many favelas and communities in other Brazilian regions to share information about COVID-19 and discuss strategies of communication during the pandemic, as well as other endeavours, like fundraising campaigns and strategies to combat fake news and to negotiate with the government. The group called themselves “Corona na Perifa”. They organised municipal, regional, and national online meetings with the participants of this group, coordinating common actions on different geographical scales. This group reunited a network of movements and activists who had known each other from previous meetings and actions centred on community communication they had organised together before the pandemic. Communities in Rio de Janeiro connected with collectives in São Paulo, the Northwest region, quilombo associations, Indigenous movements, community media, and so on. There were already national communications between the collectives of favelas in Rio de Janeiro with other collectives that had emerged from workshops, meetings, and lectures on community communication, involving those groups. These exchanges fostered connections among various movements and individuals, but these connections were neither formalised nor consistent.

During the pandemic, the group *Corona na Periferia* was formed, but various issues arose, and the initiative ultimately failed to take root. From that point onward, collectives began to organise in more spontaneous and decentralised ways. In the post-pandemic period, the dialogue between collectives grew stronger. In 2022, the collectives organised a coalition of peripheral, favela-based, indigenous, and quilombo media groups. The coalition is the result of the mobilisation that took place during the worst periods of the pandemic. This coalition is the outcome of the digital and traditional forms of organisation held in impoverished areas during the pandemic.

After the pandemic, Frente Maré and the other collectives of Rio de Janeiro's favelas dispersed. People resumed their mundane lives and disconnected from Frente Maré as the pressure of the sanitary crisis faded out. Mobilisation appears to be ephemeral and fragmented. Notwithstanding, the leadership of different collectives of community communication, with different purposes, geographies, spaces, and histories, came together to build a coalition. Some movements and activists perceived the loss of impetus of the coalition of movements during the pandemic and decided to organise together a new coalition of community communication. The coalition has eleven collective associates as follows: (1) Periferia em Movimento (São Paulo); (2) Desenrola e Não Enrola (São Paulo); (3) A Terceira Margem da Rua; (4) Frente de Mobilização da Maré (Rio de Janeiro); (5) Fala Roça (Rio de Janeiro); (6) Rede

² ADPF or “Arguição de Descumprimento de preceito Fundamental”, is a juridical instrument to denounce the violation of fundamental constitutional rights that obliges public power to take an action to stop violations. It is similar to the Fundamental Rights Violation Petitions of India.

Tumulto de Pernambuco (Pernambuco); (7) Mojubá Mídias e Conexões da Bahia (Bahia); (8) TV Comunidades (Maranhão); (9) TV Quilombo do Maranhão (Maranhão); (10) Coletivo Jovem Tapajônico (Pará); (11) Coletivo de Comunicação da CONAC (National).

Each collective carries out a series of educational activities within their territories and aims to expand these efforts into trans-organisational actions, seeking to talk about the favela in the village, the quilombo in the periphery, and vice versa. Additionally, the coalition aims to exchange experiences regarding communication technologies, mobilisation strategies, and the socio-historical conditions in which the various struggles are embedded. As Lorena Melgaço and Katharine S. Willis (2015) report, digital communication technologies are supporting the mobilisation of knowledge networks in rural areas, thus transforming the struggle for spatial and communicative justice in non-urban communities.

7. Final Remarks: What We Need to Make a Structural Change

According to Lefebvre (1972), the urban does not correspond exclusively to the territory of cities; it is a form of spatial organisation in which the city occupies a privileged position. The urban is the organisation of space marked by centrality, by the possibility of gathering, and simultaneity. Soja (2010), in turn, demonstrates how what we understand as the countryside, and even agriculture, as well as the very division of labour into specialised activities, is tied to the emergence of the city. Hence, the centrality of urban struggles in the fight for spatial justice does not mean that social struggles should be exclusively urban. If the urban consists of a form of spatial relationship that organises interactions between the countryside and the city, the fight for Spatial Justice must also involve rural spaces where capitalism threatens alternative forms of social organisation, such as Indigenous villages and quilombos.

Moreover, the struggles brought together in the coalition are not primarily aimed at overcoming the capitalist mode of production, although they oppose certain oppressive functions and structures characteristic of forms of domination in capitalist-colonial societies. The struggles of favelas, quilombos, and Indigenous associations during the pandemic represent a defence of space as a use-value, as a space of life, against capitalist forms of spatial production. Undoubtedly, racism and the criminalisation of peripheral spaces, which persist in the Brazilian social structure, are directly associated with capitalism and social class dynamics. However, racism, as patriarchy, is a power structure with its own mechanisms, objectives, and logic, which, while distinct, remain interconnected with the logic of capitalist domination (Harvey, Hardt, and Negri 2009).

The *favela*, *quilombo*, and Indigenous villages are spaces on the fringes of capitalism, spaces produced by social forces that escape, at least partially, the capitalist mode of spatial production, as they are founded on the use-value of space. Anti-capitalist, anti-racist, spatial, and communicative struggles come together to produce a common virtual territory. "No hunger, no bullets, no COVID" is a battle cry for the survival of excluded populations, a fight against extermination, necropolitics, and the biopolitical elimination of peoples who pose a threat to national economic development in capitalistic mode of production. In this sense, peripheral spaces can only be subsumed into capitalist economic relations to the extent that they are destroyed, and their inhabitants eliminated.

New communication technologies deterritorialise urban spaces as they enable new forms of gathering and simultaneity capable of connecting the city to other spaces that are either dependent on or foreign to the processes of urbanisation and

industrialisation. Although the struggles of quilombos and Indigenous peoples occur in rural areas, they challenge the centralising power of cities, advocating for spatial justice in heterogeneous territories. In our view, community communication enables the reconstruction of a common space within a virtual territory that connects diverse concrete social spaces. While not directly opposing the capitalist mode of production, the struggles analysed in this article represent insurgencies against functions and structures typical of capitalism, defending the possibility of existence and self-determination of peripheral spaces that have resisted being absorbed by capitalist logic.

The Right to the City is a multi-scalar struggle that extends beyond local boundaries, encompassing the relationship between rural and urban spaces, as well as the dynamics between nations, populations, and transnational actors. Since the urban environment is a product of international capital, organisations, and social movements, many people worldwide are affected by decisions made in spaces where they lack representation. This issue is particularly acute in the realm of communication. If, as we argued, the RttC necessarily includes a communicational dimension, then it is vital to secure representation for social movements, particularly those on the fringes of capitalism, within the global media landscape. This landscape is currently controlled by a small number of corporations in developed countries. As Fraser (2005) argues, just social processes require the participation of all affected parties, so Spatial and Communicative Justice must involve social movements in decisions about the operation of international media corporations.

The problem of fake news, which motivated groups like Frente Maré, is a global issue that cannot be solved by a national-welfare paradigm alone. Therefore, it is essential to create new modes of representation for social movements within digital communication platforms to address this challenge effectively. A key limitation of the coalition is its national scope. Effectively addressing this problem requires organising an international coalition of communicative justice movements. Despite the many limits and difficulties, the use of social media can be understood as a counter-information tactic that repurposes mainstream technologies to resist oppression (Rendón; Morales 2024).

In Latin America, the “prisoners of starvation”, the “wretched of the earth” must be mobilised beyond the industrial workers, encompassing racial minorities, women’s movements, the underemployed and unemployed, and people who don’t even have access to the formal job market and are definitively excluded from being exploited through industrial labour. We agree with David Harvey (2012, 139-140) when he says:

“This revitalized conception of the proletariat embraces and includes the now massive informal sectors characterized by temporary, insecure, and unorganized labor. Groups in the population of this sort, it turns out, have historically played an important role in urban rebellions and revolts. Their action has not always been of a left character (but then neither can craft unions always claim that). They have often been susceptible to the blandishments of unstable or authoritarian charismatic leadership, secular or religious. For this reason the politics of such disorganized groups have often wrongly been dismissed by the conventional left as those of the ‘urban mob’ (or, even more unfortunately, in Marxist lore as a ‘lumpenproletariat’), as much to be feared as embraced. It is imperative that these populations now be embraced as crucial to, rather than excluded from, anti-capitalist politics”.

In another work, Harvey (2018) speaks of “universal alienation” and the struggle against universal alienation for characterising the multifaceted forms of injustice that capitalism produces, including urban alienation:

“Alienations felt and experienced by individuals in particular places and times exist in the context of alienations produced by capitalist processes of globalisation, time-space compression, accumulation by dispossession, land seizures, and the wholesale exploitation of billions of workers, men and women drawn from different cultural and geographical settings all around the world. [...] alienation exists almost everywhere. There is abundant evidence, for example, of deep alienation with respect to contemporary forms of the labour process. The problem for labour isn’t simply that there are not enough good-paying jobs to go around (which is bad enough in most areas of the world), but that there are few meaningful jobs. Widespread deindustrialisation has meant the elimination of jobs that were exploitative but meaningful (the steel worker in a bustling factory) and the rise of jobs that are exploitative but feel meaningless (like security guard in a shopping mall). Frustration at and alienation from the political process (traditional political parties in particular) is everywhere in evidence. Resentments at and frustrations with a state apparatus that fails to reassure or facilitate greater freedoms are on the rise even as they impose excessive burdens on individual rights and actions. Repressive regulatory regimes are, it seems, producing oppositional movements embracing libertarianism or what might be called a widespread non-ideological cultural anarchism. The sheer volume of nonsense paperwork and regulatory impositions has increased exponentially in many sectors and places. Daily life, meanwhile, is becoming increasingly frustrating and nightmarish: fighting extra charges on telephone bills, credit cards and arguing over health insurance reimbursements consume a vast amount of time [...] So where are all the protest movements? [...] They can be found in the heart of metropolitan centres as well as on the rural margins. Many of the major protests since 2000 or so have been animated by groups of this sort. Urban movements of discontent are on the rise in particular. They are often movements of populations alienated by the deteriorating conditions of daily life in the city and the lack of any kind of democracy (Lefebvre 1981). They demand empowerment and ways to ameliorate their increasing marginalisation as citizens rather than as workers. These sorts of struggles are qualitatively different to the traditional labour struggles around factory work. As factories disappear in many parts of the world, one cutting edge of anti-capitalist struggles lies in the field of realisation rather than production” (Harvey 2018, 428, 429, 434).

We believe it is instrumental and essential to re-evaluate the strategies and categories of resistance through concrete and daily struggles of marginalised sectors of society, particularly focusing on the struggle for Spatial Justice, Urban Activism, and Community Communication observed in this study. The different forms of struggle must be interconnected in their difference and irreducibility, constructing a common voice among the excluded while acknowledging the multiplicity of their realities (Sodré 2019). We must explore new and creative modes of resistance to capitalism and its ideological apparatuses. The challenge at hand is how to connect and intertwine traditional forms of struggle with the emerging community and spatial strategies of resistance originating from local and marginalised sectors of society. In this article, we showed how a local and ephemeral movement created during the pandemic could

connect with other local movements to resist a sanitary crisis and build a network of local, communicative, and spatial struggles scattered across national space. This coalition was recreated after the pandemic with other aims and goals, linking different spaces through their particularities and differences.

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About the Authors

Gizele de Oliveira Martins is a journalist, human rights activist, and PhD candidate at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). An award-winning professional, her work focuses on anti-racism and human rights. She is the author of "Militarization and Censorship - the Struggle for Freedom of Expression in the Maré Favela," a consultant for the National Network for the Protection of Journalists and Communicators, and works with several community organizations.

Lou G. L. Caffagni is a researcher in education and communication affiliated with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the Mário Schenberg Institute. He holds a PhD from the University of São Paulo and writes on literature, school curricula, communication, and social movements. He has also published a book on the juvenile justice system.