

JORNAL DE ARTIGOS NÃO LIDOS

When I visited Brazil for the first time I wasn't especially attracted to the exotic picture most of us are familiar with — the beach life, the beautiful people, the music and the parties. What intrigued me most were the isolated islands hidden within the big cities. The danger and chaos of the slums. Its invisible borders, the places I couldn't enter and the stories they were hiding.

Most of the stories I'd heard about the favelas were colored by a unilaterally-percieved world of drugs, crime and poverty. I felt the need to discover the favelas myself and look for stories that went beyond the stereotypes communicated by the media.

As Reporter without Boundaries (Repórter sem Beiras), I stayed in various favelas in Recife and Rio de Janeiro in order to understand favela life. I collected my observations into visual journals called Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos. The 'Journal of Unread Articles' is a series of articles that try to communicate a broader view and sense of personal identity in these communities. Although my aim was to break down the clichés, it was difficult to look beyond the poverty and lowly circumstances these people live in. The stories of Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos reflect my personal views; the views of an outsider. The stories give an impression about a very specific moment. At this moment, more then ever, favelas are changing fast; their structure, function and definition.

Some of the Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos articles became public wall journals in the city of Rio de Janeiro, during July and August 2011. The big posters, glued onto the walls of the streets, attracted the attention of passersby. As people stopped to read them, impromptu discussions ensued about whatever issue or topic the journal dealt with. It is my hope that this publication evokes similar reactions, interest and discussions.

Repórter sem Beiras, 2011



It’s rare to see them on the *morro*. The few that are here often turn up in the least expected places. Splendid, silent, corroded hulks — relics from a time when there were roads for them to travel — dinosaurs in a misplaced open-air museum. One cannot help wondering what they are doing here, who owns them, and what will become of them.

There’s a beautiful one on the hill of *Fogueteiro*. Why was it abandoned? Old age, a broken engine, too much rust and rot? Some say there was an accident. That it was rammed from the side and totalled. The paint is cracked and faded. There are bruises all over it. These are the rumors that circulate in the village, but no one really knows for sure.

One in particular has attracted a lot of attention. It’s parked on a footpath in *Cidade Nova*. It’s a VW *Fusca* and used to be very popular, supposedly because of its beetle-shaped design and bright round headlights. They say it got its exotic looks from its European roots. The first of its relatives immigrated from Germany in the 1950’s. It’s aged a lot since it was made. The paint job has suffered from too much exposure to the sun. The right bumper has come unhinged, the hood has collapsed, and one of the tires is flat. All attempts to budge it have been fruitless — the result, no doubt, of a streak of German stubbornness.

These dinosaurs are a species belonging to the *asfalto*. Nobody on the *morro* can afford one. In the city there are millions of them, clogging thoroughfares and spewing fumes into the air. Their owners are impatient and aggressive, weaving in and out of traffic, overtaking

DINOSAURS

WRECKS

slower ones. Accidents are a daily occurrence and serious ones often make the evening news. Speeding is a big thing here and being the first to reach the ‘finish line’. It’s all about rushing and time. On the *morro*, time doesn’t exist like it does in the ‘*Big City*’. In the favelas, happiness is not measured by time. Perhaps that is why the dinosaurs have come to die here, to kick their old speeding habits, to spend their final days in peace and quiet on the hills overlooking the busy, bustling, sprawling city below. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Dinosaurs, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos Archive: ‘Dinosaurs’, Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos, November 25, 2010. This article is based a several visits to the Fogueteiro, Rocinha, Jardim Gramacho and Cidade Nova favelas in Rio de Janeiro, July & August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.*

Glossary **Asfalto** — refers to asphalted i.e. paved streets. It’s slang for indicating the places in Brazilian cities where the middle-classes live. **Big City** — refers to Rio de Janeiro. **Cidade Nova** — is a neighborhood on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. For-

merly a swamp, the area was drained and occupied in the 1970’s by favela dwellers who had been banned from the city center in Rio where the favela they’d been living in was torn down. **Fogueteiro** — is the name of a small favela in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the popular tourist quarter of Santa Theresa. **Fusca** — is the name for the Brazilian version of the Volkswagen Beetle, also known as the Volkswagen Type 1. Brazilian production of the Beetle started in 1953, with parts imported from Germany. By 1959, the cars were 100% made in Brazil. Production ended in 1996. The Brazilian version retained the 1958-1964 body style (Europe and U.S. version) with the thick door pillars and small quarter glass. **Jardim Gramacho** — is one of the world’s largest landfills and is located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro city. Next to the trash dump, people have erected illegal shanty settlements. Not only do these people live in the trash, they live off it as well. Families have started up small operations in their backyards where they recycle the trash coming from the city of Rio. **Morro** — is Brazilian for ‘hill’. Favelas are mostly located on hills and the word ‘morro’ is a nicer word for favela. **Rocinha** — (literally, Portuguese for small ranch) is the largest favela in Rio de Janeiro. It is located in Rio’s South Zone, between the districts of São Conrado and Gávea. It is built on a steep hillside overlooking the city, just one kilometer from the beach. Although Rocinha is technically classified as a neighborhood, many still refer to it as a favela. It developed from a shanty town into an urbanized slum. There are several organizations today offering favela tours in Rocinha.



With the music turned off, Baiano’s movements become a contemporary dance piece. The bizarre choreography starts at the wall on the right side of his one-room house. Facing the wall, he jumps up once, twice, three times. Each time he jumps a little higher, stretching his arm along his body and pointing dramatically at the black hole high up in the wall. He lands with perfect precision on both feet, first on the tip of his toes, then his heels. He pauses for a moment, then strides across the room to the opposite wall where he stops and strikes a pose, back and neck arched forward. With a broad sweeping gesture of his right arm, he points his finger at a second hole at the bottom of the wall. Then he turns — abruptly — and strides across the room again, kneeling down on the floor, moving his hands back and forth over the surface of the wall searching for the mark. The moment he finds it, he stops and looks over his shoulder. Dramatically. At us.

I’m impressed. I pull at the sleeve of my interpreter and ask him to translate. We start over. ‘This is where the bullet entered the first time’, Baiano explains excitedly, pointing at a black hole high up in the wall at the right side of the room. ‘From here the bullet ricocheted to this side of the room’, he goes on, indicating the second hole at the bottom of the opposite wall. ‘You can see that the speed of the bullet slowed down because it was not fast enough to penetrate. Instead it ricocheted again to the other side of the wall’. Here he runs back to the right wall and my interpreter and I follow him. He scans the wall searching for the hole. This is where the bullet lost speed and stopped.

BULLET DANCE

WRECKS

‘I was happy I wasn’t home’, mumbles Baiano. ‘Otherwise you wouldn’t be visiting me here in this house, but down the hill, in the cemetery’. I trace the bullet’s invisible trajectory as it criss-crossed the room that day. It was a miracle no one was killed. Baiano has been trying to escape *balas perdidas* since living on the *morro* of *Fogueteiro*. We are standing in the shade of a banana tree, next to the ruin of what was once a cosy family home. The decaying red-brick walls are hard to discern in the jungle of overgrown trees and shrubs. This wreckage was Baiano’s first house in *Fogueteiro*. Its well-placed, ‘strategic’ position on the hillside offered a panoramic view of the city center. Unfortunately, rivaling drug gangs knew this too and would often hold up in his house while battling other gangs on opposite hills. His barraco was often caught in

the cross-fire, and the facade eventually began to look like a piece of Swiss cheese. The day a stray bullet went through a wall and hit him in the leg, Baiano decided it was time to move. He was lucky the bullet hit him in the leg and not in the head. It took him six months to recover and learn to walk again. During this time he couldn’t work, and without a job he couldn’t support his family of five children. In the end his wife left. A year later, he built a new barraco on a piece of land further down the hill. It had no view, but at least was beyond the reach of stray bullets. It was quiet and peaceful with a lot of greenery and trees that camouflaged the house. One rainy night, a landslide occurred and a house further up the hill came crashing down on his roof and the house collapsed. The *morro*’s ‘citizens’ committee found him a temporary place to live. Today Baiano lives in this temporary residence on top of the hill, high enough up where no other *barracos* can threaten him. But the house has no windows and the slender rays of light that penetrate the bullet holes in the walls offer little consolation. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Bullet Dance, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos Archive: ‘Bullet Dance’, Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos, November 25, 2010. This article is based on spending time with Baiano — living in the Fogueteiro favela, Rio de Janeiro, July 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.*

Glossary **Bala perdida** — is Brazilian for ‘stray bullet’. **Barracos** — or shanties are the names given to the poorly-constructed dwellings in favelas. **Fogueteiro** — is the name of a small favela in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the popular tourist quarter of Santa Theresa. **Morro** — is Brazilian for ‘hill’. Favelas are mostly located on hills and the word ‘morro’ is a nicer word for favela.



Sunday afternoon on *Ipanema* beach. A white woman sunbathing on a bright-colored towel. A white man jogging on the beach. A black man in the sand dragging a box, shouting ‘Coca-cola! *Guarana!* Fantaaa’. A black man in the sand dragging a bin bag. This one seems invisible. No one pays any attention to him. He performs his job silently, collecting empty cans of soft drink and beer. At the end of the day, after the sun has set in the ocean and all the empty cans hidden in the sand have been found, the *catador* collects three big bags and ties them together into a single bundle. He puts the bundle on his head and walks away, like an ant with an oversize top hat. They do their prowling at night. They all have their own ‘specialty’. Some scavenge for plastic bottles in public trash bins, others for soft drink and beer cans. Some, the *papeleiros*, collect cardboard. They push carts, going from shop to shop, collecting cardboard boxes. By the time they finish their rounds, the tower of boxes is often twice as tall as they are. Human ants — carrying, dragging and pushing volumes that dwarf their own bodies. They are called *catadores* and they recycle human waste. What they find as trash, they resell. *Catadores* don’t live in the same neighborhoods as the *asfalto*. They usually come from the nearby hills. When their job is done, they leave the city and return to their homes on the *morro*. Some, the ‘rat ants’ have no homes. They live on the street. The recyclables they collect earn them a few coins for buying food. This is how they survive. A mobile phone. A charger, its cord wound neatly in the shape of an ‘8’. A set of three chargers, all different models and all with their cords wound up like the first. Two

HUMAN ANTS

WRECKS

toy cars. A photograph of a woman in a frame. A painting of Alpine scenery. Another one with a cow. An assortment of books lying side by side; their covers form a carpet of blue, green, white, red, white, gray, marine blue, white, brown. A pair of women’s high heel shoes, fake leather, snake-skin pattern, bright yellow. A cassette player, most likely broken. A cheap-looking gold hand-bag. A toy hippopotamus with a mouthful of bright sharp teeth. A plastic doll with a missing arm and no clothes. An LP of Michael Jackson’s Thriller. These are the typical goods of a *catador*, a diverse collection of gadgets and sundry objects, laid out and arranged with no particular logic on a sidewalk or path. Next to the neatly ordered objects is a young woman lying on the ground on a sheet of cardboard. She’s either asleep or passed out from sniffing glue — a common practice for suppressing hunger. I have my eye on the little hip-

popotamus, but can’t buy it now with the ‘shopkeeper’ asleep. I decide to come back later, in the hope that siesta time will be over. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Human Ants, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Human Ants’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, November 25, 2010. This article is based a residence in Rio de Janeiro, July & August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Asfalto** — refers to asphalted i.e. paved streets. It’s slang for indicating the places in Brazilian cities where the middle-classes live. **Catadores** — is Brazilian for street waste scavengers. They collect recyclable material which is then sold to a middleman who amasses recycled waste and sells it directly to the recycling industries. A conservative estimate indicates that there are between 500.000 and 800.000 catadores in Brazil who are responsible for the collection of more than 85% of the recyclable material brought back to the recycling industries, but are paid very little for their efforts. **Guarana** — is the brand name of a Brazilian cola-like soft drink. It’s made from the red Guarana berry that is found in the Amazon. **Morro** — is Brazilian for ‘hill’. Favelas are generally located on hills and the word ‘morro’ is a nicer term for favela. **Papeleiros** — is Brazilian for cart pushers.

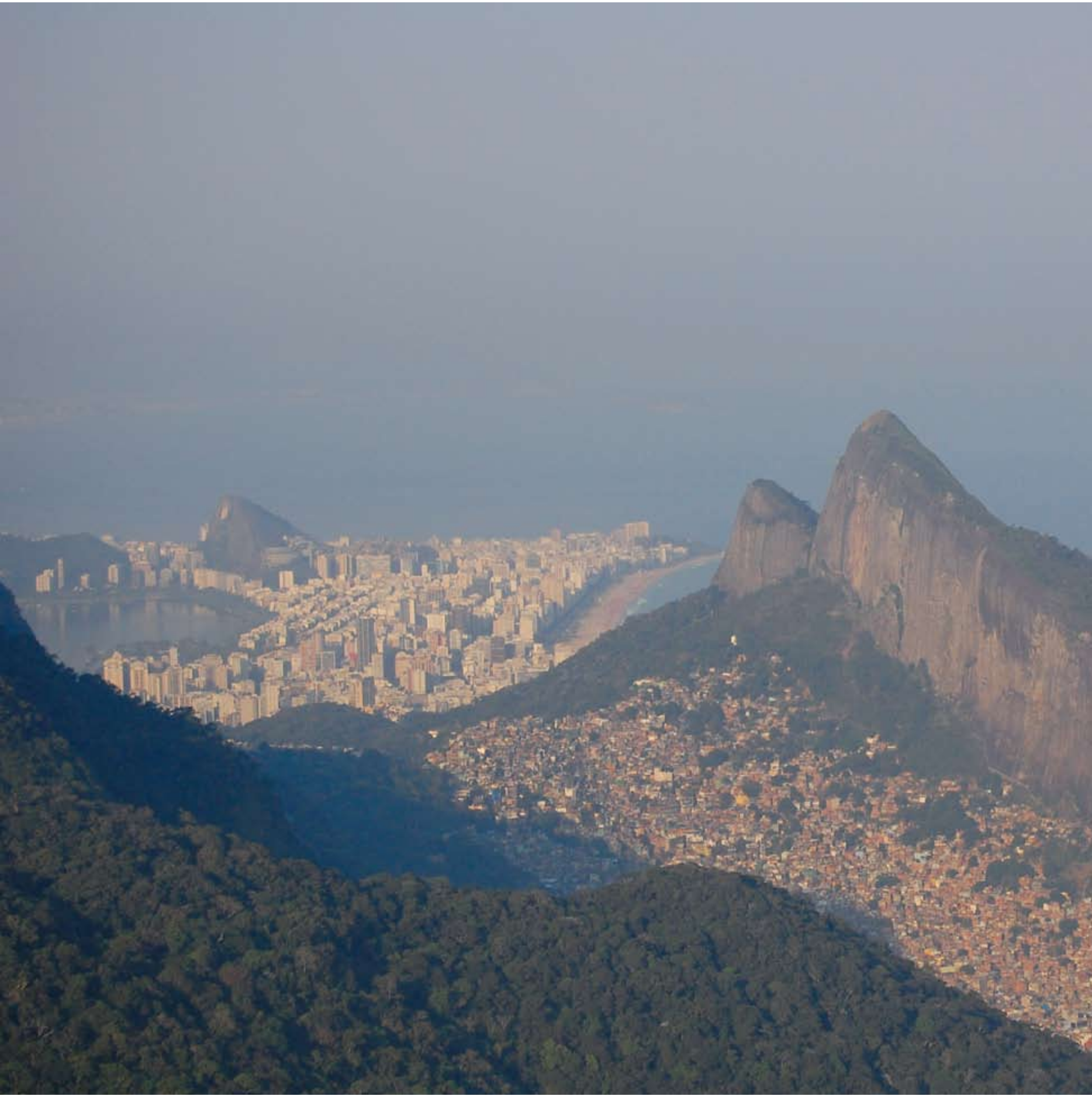


What began as a light shower quickly accelerated into a major downpour as the pattering of raindrops grew louder on the thin metal roof. I hadn’t even noticed it was raining and was certainly not concerned. Not so with Tininha. Her ear was trained. The sound of raindrops had set off an alarm bell somewhere in her brain. She stopped talking with me and sprang into action. She ran out of the house and came back in with a massive vinyl garden hose. She maneuvered it like a hunter who had just snared a cobra, dragging it across the room, hoisting it over the sofa and nearly knocking over a table, across the floor and into the kitchen. There she proceeded to force the head of the unwieldy beast into a hole in the brick on the counter next to the sink. Within a minute, a steady stream of brown water, mud and stones came gushing out of its mouth. The rain and sudden availability of water had transformed Tininha’s mood. I couldn’t imagine being happy about doing dishes, but I guess she felt relieved to finally have water to wash the collection of dirty pots and pans, plates, bowls, cups and saucers that had sat for days, waiting for rain, in three large plastic tubs. The dishes and various utensils had been both home and food source to an army of nasty, aggressive flies. I hoped the rain would drive them away and give us some peace, if only for a little while. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Cobra, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Cobra’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, October 28, 2010. This article is based on spending time with Tininha — living and working in Jardim Gramacho, Rio de Janeiro, August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

COBRA

GATO



I’ve been walking around in circles for fifteen minutes now. The tedium of this looping parcours is beginning to affect me. After every thirty loops, I move on to another spot a few paces away — all the while keeping tabs on the subway exit. I continue like this for what seems ages. Finally, I notice two legs walking quickly in my direction; two legs coming straight towards me. My brain sounds an alarm. I snap to attention and recognize it’s Ana. Her face is tense, her smile is forced; she’s excusing herself for being late. It’s her boss’s fault. He made her work late. There was no time to go home, change clothes, eat. She complains as she wobbles on those gorgeous, much-too-high, spike heels. On the way to the pub she keeps talking about how she dislikes her job and boss, and complaining about how expensive *Ip-anema* is. She has no time to go on holiday or for what she calls ‘leisure and pleasure’. She looks very fragile in those too-high heels, so I slow down, me in my cheap comfy *Havaianas*. She sips her cappuccino and sets the cup down on the saucer. Her carmine-red lipstick leaves a middle-class signature on the expensive white porcelain finish. As her hand leaves the handle of the porcelain design, she nervously grabs the large leather handbag and searches for something inside. She finds the document I’ve asked for and puts it on the table. A stark white A4-format sheet of paper that contrasts with the warmth of the dark-brown wooden table. It’s her electricity and water bill. A carmine-red polished nail points to the column entitled ‘public expenses’. Registered taxpayers — the middle-class of Rio, i.e. all non-favela residents — receive a

LEAKY BILL

GATO

monthly invoice for private consumption of electricity and water, as well as public consumption of electricity and water. Public consumption includes electricity siphoned off the street lights in Rio’s favelas. In other words, the middle-class taxpayers are the ones who end up paying for the thousands of *gatos* pirating electricity from the ‘urban trees’ in the city’s greedy *barracos*. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Leaky Bill, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Leaky Bill’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, October 28, 2010. This article is based on spending time with Ana — living in Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, July & August 2010.

Glossary **Barracos** — or shanties are the names given to the poorly-constructed dwellings in favelas. **Gato** — is Brazilian slang for the illegal tapping of electricity from sources such as street lamps. It’s used as well for stealing water an internet services. **Havaianas** — is a Brazilian brand of flip flops. **Ipanema** — is a known beach district in the South Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro.



People were moving back and forth, pushing their wheelbarrows to the swamp. They wanted to annihilate and wreak revenge on the encroaching sand. The swamp had eaten little children, and the buzzing of its mosquito squads — shouting ‘Malaria!’ — had become unbearable. The greedy swamp had been consuming tons of poisoned garbage dumped there by the angry people, until it ate itself to death. It died with the thunder of a big, foul-smelling burp. When the swamp was finally conquered, the people started to occupy the new territory. Little by little, homes where built on the freshly mapped-out land. A grid of sand paths was designed connecting the self-made *bar-racos*. The people called their new city ‘*Cidade Nova*’ and each street was given a letter-name. Footprints in the dust and sand marked the movement of its inhabitants. A bird flying in the sky could see the movements of Rodrigo going from his home to the bakery and back again. Old Vitalina took her daily walk — tiny footprints in the sand — from her doorstep to the gate and across the street to her neighbor’s. And Erica walked from street A to street B, then turned right into street G. Her footprints ended at the bus stop, from where she departed for her job in the ‘*Big City*’. Rain would erase ‘The History of Movement’. The streets would become rivers of mud, preventing the people from leaving their homes, keeping them prisoners for a day, sometimes even a week. It was May, 2010 — exactly six months before the elections — when the big machines arrived. They coated the yellow paths of dust and dried-up mud with a

EVERYTHING CHANGES

CHANGE

smooth layer of black asphalt. People said ‘It was time! The streets needed paving’. They had been dreaming of this for years, and hoped that the black bituminous substance would give them the same good life as ‘The Other People’ living in ‘*Asfalto*’. They soon realized, however, that asphalt also brought pain and horror. The hardness was hurting people, it broke people’s legs. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Everything Changes, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Everything Changes’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, March 31, 2011. This article is based the workshop ‘Rua sem Nome’ by Repórter sem Beiras in Cidade Nova, Rio de Janeiro, August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Asfalto** — refers to asphalted i.e. paved streets. It’s slang for indicating the places in Brazilian cities where the middle-classes live. **Barracos** — or shanties are the names given to the poorly-constructed dwellings in favelas. **Big City** — refers to Rio de Janeiro. **Cidade Nova** — is a neighborhood on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. Formerly a swamp, the area was drained and occupied in the 1970’s by favela dwellers who had been banned from the city center in Rio where the favela they’d

been living in was torn down. The occupation by the former city center favela dwellers was organized by a small group of designated citizens who divided the land into a system of grids based on ‘streets’ (actually dirt tracks) and building lots. The division was very rational. Each street was given a letter (Street A, Street B, Street C) and each building lot a number (House 146, House 147, House 148). In May of 2010, after nearly forty years, the streets of Cidade Nova were finally paved.



We reached Baiano’s house, or ‘what used to be his house’, after a wild mud safari. It started out with the two of us jumping like kids from one stair to another, along the path that descended down the *Fogueteiro morro*. It got more serious as we left the stairs and tried to make our way along the steep hillside. There were no houses here; in fact, I had never imagined there might be places on this hill that were ‘empty’. The brown hillside was coated in mud-soaked debris, leftovers from a landslide caused by heavy rains earlier in the year. Nobody had bothered to clean up the mess. I wanted to stop and have a better look, but Baiano kept moving. I had to concentrate on keeping my balance, trying not to lose my flip flops, fall in the mud or slide down the hill. We soon entered a little zone of green, another surprise. It felt refreshing, this ‘island of jungle’, treasuring the last bits of the extinct *Mata Atlântica*. All of a sudden Baiano ordered me to stop. He tore a piece of cardboard from a nearby pile of trash and laid it down over a puddle — like a real gentleman — so that I wouldn’t get my feet wet. I didn’t see the point since my feet were already covered in mud. He probably thought I was a spoiled Western city girl, which made me angry, but I didn’t feel like getting into a discussion and it wouldn’t have mattered anyway. The house was surrounded by trees and other greenery. I hadn’t experienced such silence in a long time. It felt good. The meddling of chirping birds put me in a peaceful mood. No sign we were still on the *morro*, or in Rio. A quiet oasis isolated from the rest of the *morro*, the rest of the city and the rest of the world. A peaceful place to raise children. No one could imagine it as a place of tragedy. My eyelids were fluttering. I wondered if it was because my eyes were adapting to the darkness in the house, or because they were trying to process the chaos and distraction.

THE DESTROYED ROOM 2010

RAIN

It took me a while before I could define what I was actually seeing: a pile of red bricks haphazardly heaped in the middle of the room next to a cream-colored sofa, a kitchen cupboard hanging askew on a wall, an atlas lying open at the page on Europe with a brown spot on the Balkans, a bunch of clothes spread out on the floor — stiff and colorless from being soaked in mud, a section of wall that had buckled, pieces of broken CD boxes covered in mud, a red plastic toy car imprisoned under the weight of a pile of red bricks, a wifi stereo lying on its side — barely recognizable in the mud, a broken LP record, a shampoo bottle, a children’s book, a kitchen pot, a brick, two tins of canned food, a set of headphones, another brick, a pile of bricks, a plastic bag, a doll, mud, a plastic soft drink bottle, a TV... The landslide had demolished all the inside walls, leaving one large single room. Everything that had once been standing was now on the floor. Although my eyes could see,

my brain could not comprehend. My head was full of descriptions, trying to make an inventory of every object in the room and its dramatic condition. When my brain finally started to work, the first thing it could think of was ‘Destroyed Room 1978’. It was amazing, exciting: me being a part of this art work, to be standing in this 3D version of a 2D photograph taken by Jeff Wall. It was beautiful. ‘It all happened very fast’, I heard Baiano saying ‘... but at the same time it was happening in slow motion’. I woke up out of my daydream with embarrassment, and saw Baiano’s sad face. The manic and uncontrolled violence of the rain, had ordered, like in Delacroix’s ‘The Death of Sardanapalus’, the destruction of everything Baiano had owned. He was left without a house, without a home, without any of his possessions. Luckily he and his five children survived. I tried to imagine the sound of destruction. My eyes were drawn to the beauty of this crime scene, remembering the recent past of a long time ago. Everything has remained untouched. What seemed to have happened only a few days ago actually occurred nearly six months ago. Nobody has ever cared to clean up the mess. (Repórter sem Beiras)

The Destroyed Room 2010, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘The Destroyed Room 2010’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, February 24, 2011. This article is based on spending time with Baiano — living in the Fogueteiro favela, Rio de Janeiro, July 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Fogueteiro** — is the name of a small favela in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the popular tourist quarter of Santa Theresa. **Morro** — is Brazilian for ‘hill’. Favelas are mostly located on hills and the word ‘morro’ is a nicer word for favela. **Mata Atlântica** — or Atlantic Forest is a region of tropical and subtropical moist forest, tropical dry forest, tropical savannas, and mangrove forests which extends along the Atlantic coast of Brazil from Rio Grande do Norte state in the north to Rio Grande do Sul state in the south, and inland as far as Paraguay and the Misiones Province of Argentina.



EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY

WRECKS

It happened on a warm winter night, in a suburb of Rio. It was a restless Sunday, with no moon and no sleep. I was looking out of the window into the darkened square. Gradually I began to notice tiny dots of light on the distant horizon. Eventually, more dots appeared. My imaginary sheep. I started to count. At 4:08 am, two rays of bright white light illuminated the wet pavement. A car driving at full speed entered the street from the right. I waited for the second car, the ‘chaser car’ to appear, but it was only a ghost. At the end of the street stood a huge electricity pole with a street lamp that emitted a single beam of muted yellow. The car drove straight towards the pole and crashed into it. The street light flashed three times and the car exploded in a million sparks and colors. The pole fell to the ground and all the lights went out, and the tiny dots in the sky were extinguished. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Explosions in the Sky, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Explosions in the Sky’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, November 25, 2010. This article is based the workshop ‘Jornal do Bairro’ by Repórter sem Beiras in Cidade Nova, Rio de Janeiro, August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.



It’s a city inside a city. Unlike the bigger city that surrounds it, this city does not dominate, debilitate or compete. Its residents are part of an isolated micro culture with its own distinctive ‘lifestyle’. Each resident owns his or her own house. Rarely do couples or families share the same roof. While all the houses are grey and made of stone, craftsmanship and styles vary. Some are large and quite beautiful, decorated like small castles; pillars accentuating a majestic entrance; a statue of an angel decorating the front garden. There are sculptures of flowers, a mother holding the body of her dead son, the torso of a scholarly-looking wrinkled old man next to the portrait of a woman smiling, the tight-muscled body of a young athlete. Other residents occupy more humble dwellings, devoid of any architectural flourishes — a block of streets with houses all in the same plain, standard design. Here and there a plant or pot of flowers marks a particular residence, differentiating it from all the other identical ones around it. Some of the residents live in cellars and some in an area the size of a push cart; a space just big enough to bury a body. Others have nothing but a hole in the ground. The streets that connect the dwellings in this city are of various widths and design. Some are paved and lined with trees, others are nothing but gravel roads and sand paths. The streets have no names and the dwellings no numbers. The only identifying markers are the names and dates of birth of the residents, and the dates they moved in. If you knock on their doors, they will not answer. For reasons unknown, they do not like visitors from the world they left behind. They pretend to be invisible and prefer to be left alone.

CIDADE DOS MORTOS

WRECKS

This is *Caju*, the ‘City of Death’ and home to 35,000 inhabitants. It is a hierarchical copy of the ‘*Big City*’. The homes of the rich are closest to the entrance. Further along, the architecture begins to change. Castle tombs are gradually replaced by simple standard graves and blocks of row houses. Eventually the path ends at a large expanse of empty field with nothing but the odd crooked cross sticking up out of the ground. At first it appears to be unused territory waiting to be filled with new houses. In reality, this is the home of the poorest of the poor in *Caju*. As evening approaches, swarms of mosquitoes descend on the city. These are the guards of ‘Cidade dos Mortos’ announcing it is time to leave. ‘GO! GO!’ they seem to scream as they buzz and dive, attacking from all sides. Soon it will be dark and the ghosts of the city will awaken. (*Repórter sem Beiras*)

Cidade dos Mortos, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Cidade dos Mortos’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, November 25, 2010. This article is based a residence in Rio de Janeiro, July & August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Big City** — refers to Rio de Janeiro. **Caju** — is the popular name for the São Francisco Xavier Cemetery, a necropolis in Rio de Janeiro. It is considered one of the largest cemeteries in Brazil. It is located in the neighborhood of Caju in northern Rio de Janeiro.

REPÓRTER SEM BEIRAS OR THE OTHER IS YOU

Daniela Labra

“*Observe the observed observer*”
— W. Burroughs

Many readers have probably never set foot on Brazilian soil. Clearly the theme discussed in this show — everyday life in the Brazilian favelas — is a foreign urban experience. Apart from being geographically distant, this reality bends and recreates the European influence that was engrained in Brazil with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in 1808.

It is also unlikely that you are familiar with the events of the second half of the nineteenth century and the role of the country’s intellectual elite in the years following independence. Inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment, they supported the project of constructing a rising tropical Continent-Nation, a nation which excluded the poorest members of society, emancipated slaves and women. This, it seems, is what prevented the future development of a modern, socially-inclusive country. It also led to other problems, such as the phenomenon of today’s urban favelas.

The favelas are areas of paradox and poverty where official power is subverted. They are also places where new aesthetics and economic paradigms are being created and invented. In order to understand how things work here, one needs to experience these contrasting regions from an insider’s perspective, i.e. from the perspective of the favela dwellers themselves.

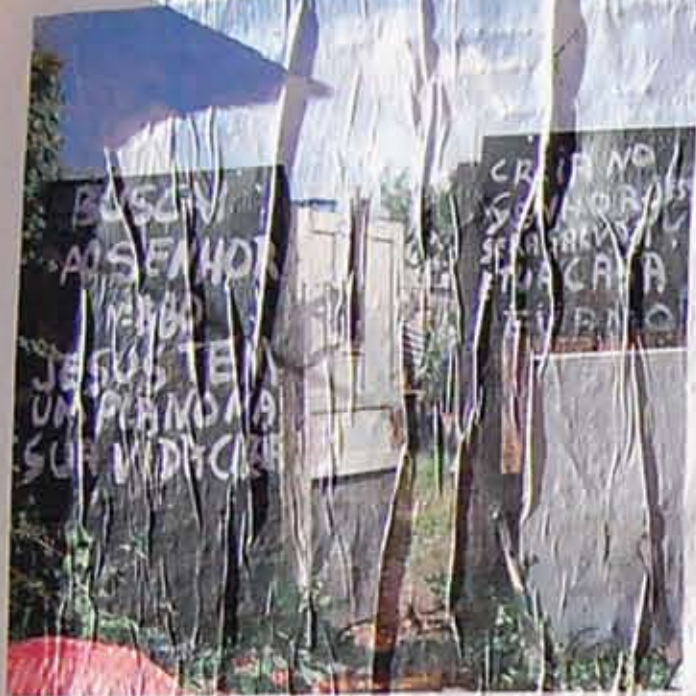
At a time of global economic crisis, Brazil, with its human and natural resources, has been rising politically in the intense panorama of international capitalism and degraded ecosystems. It has been trying to be seen as a territory of miscegenation, offering strategies for overcoming and resisting hegemonic nations in decline.

In this sense, “improvising” Brazilian style has become an inside trademark and cliché. It is used both as a first and last resource and offers real, positive possibilities for production in times of adversity. But it also generates the problem of believing in the “temporary-permanent” where unfinished public and private situations end up becoming ultimate solutions. In a way, the favela is the achievement of this peculiar Brazilian operational means.

“Repórter sem Beiras”, developed by designer Annelies Vaneycken, began as a “social design” project that deals with stigmatized populations and the negative perception attributed to them by society. Looking to transform through visual communications, and uncomfortable with the established, commercial side of graphic design, she decided to create a series of graphic pieces with poor communities in Brazil.

Vaneycken is interested in deconstructing social roles that have become cultural identity clichés. For this reason, she spent long periods of time inside communities in Rio de Janeiro and Recife where she conducted workshops in visual communications. The news articles she worked on addressed simple questions raised in the favelas by the people themselves. Issues like misery and violence, so often the focus of the media, were not among them. Annelies Vaneycken works as an information (and empowerment) communicator for those who have no access to any form of media. Despite the risk that these practices involve — in terms of confining the object that is being studied in an ethnographic vision — she deals with unknown logistics carefully in order to study them without moral judgement.

For Vaneycken, outsiders occupy a central position in the study, and she describes herself as one of the “Others”. By admitting her own inadequacy in the periphery of the world’s periphery, she avoids all posturing (which could diminish the poetic and political objective of her work) and the temptation to use clichés that are close-minded and ‘aestheticise’ the media. In this sense, there is no “Other” in her work — just you and us.



JORNAL DE ARTIGOS NÃO LIDOS

—
RÁDIO 24 HORAS

JORNAL DE ARTIGOS NÃO LIDOS

—
DINOSSAUROS

JORNAL DE ARTIGOS NÃO LIDOS

—
THE DESTROYED ROOM 2010

WHY I LOVE FAVELAS

by Dr. Janice Perlman

As someone who has spent a large portion of my life working in and writing about favelas, I am pleased to contribute to the project *Repórter sem Beiras*, which Annelies Vaneycken created as a counterfoil to the stereotypes portraying Rio's favelas in the mass media. Whether represented as violent and vicious, as in the film "City of God", or as exotic and exciting as in favela chic, favela tours, and favela furniture, the same message is sent: that of "other", not "us".

In my research and writing, I have endeavored to give voice to those who are not heard and to tell their untold stories. I first went to Rio's favelas in 1968. As I followed migrants from Brazil's poor Northeast into the city, I recognized that this shift would become the marking population shift during my lifetime. As part of the research for my doctoral dissertation, I lived with families in three of Rio's favelas — places considered so dangerous at the time that taxi drivers were afraid to stop near them.

It is fair to say that, outside my family home, I have never felt more protected, safe and embraced in any community than I was in Catacumba, Nova Brasília and Vila Ideal in Caxias. I have stayed in touch with the families in whose homes I lived and with as many as possible of the 750 people I interviewed. This is what made it possible to find the people and to trace the life trajectories of four generations for my recent book, *Favela*.

Favela residents were considered "marginals" — outlaws, criminals, lazy ne'er do wells, prostitutes and threats to the stability of society. They were non-persons. As their shacks were, of necessity, built from scrap materials so too the people were construed as being garbage — to be removed by bulldozers and thrown out of sight. From the first settlement 100 years ago, the policy had been to remove them.

Until fairly recently favelas did not appear on city maps, even as their populations grew faster than the rest of the city, their labor kept the city functioning and their culture kept the city vibrant. Even today, more than 25 years since the end of the military dictatorship and the return to democracy, favela residents do not enjoy the full rights of citizenship and do not have the same job opportunities as others with the same educational level. It will be difficult to overcome the legacy of inequality and exclusion that perpetuate this stigma, but with popular and political will it is not impossible.

This is an extraordinary moment in the history of Rio. For the first time in recent history, there is an alliance among the political parties of the Mayor, the Governor and the President. This at a time when Rio is preparing to host the Rio + 20 Earth Summit in 2012, the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. What an opportunity to show the world a model of a socially inclusive, environmentally just city — a marvelous city for all! New public policies have replaced those of favela removal with those of on-site upgrading and the state is re-taking control of the favela territories from the drug gangs and militias. The Units of Pacifying Police (UPPs) now occupy 18 of the 1,250 favelas, preventing the use of arms and restoring the freedom to come and go without fear of dying in the crossfire. This will be effective only if it is accompanied by a massive income-generating effort bringing livelihoods to the residents. To become "gente" — people with dignity and respect — a person needs to be able to earn a living. I hope the investments in physical infrastructure, such as the gondolas and in security, will be more than matched by the investment in human capital.

I close with a small poem I wrote that captures why it has become a lifelong passion of mine to champion their cause.

Why I Love Favelas

*Favela is life, favela is love
Favela is freedom, friendship and feijoada
Favela is people persevering
It is laughter and tears, life and death
— only a hair's-breadth apart
It is a place where the unexpected is expected
and spontaneity is the norm
It is not all pain, poverty, and passivity
It is people living their lives amid a civil war
People who would like to work and to study
People trying to be recognized as people by other people
For whom they are invisible and inconsequential*

Favelas provide a free space, tolerant of diversity and deviance. They welcome non-conformity, small seeds of oppositional behavior bubbling up to the surface and sustaining hope. Favelas are not the shadow side of the city; rather, the city is the shadow side of the favelas. With all the hardship and grief within them, there is still a life force in them that is absent in the most costly condominiums in the rest of Rio. In many ways, the rich have imprisoned themselves, walling themselves off from urban conviviality in the process of protecting themselves from those who they would not include in their city. Outsiders, whether drawn to eliminate or emulate the favelas, do not see that they represent a way of life, a state of mind. Like the plant for which they were named, they possess deep roots, spiky thorns, and fragrant flowers.

Dr. Janice Perlman,
September 4, 2011



Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro (Oxford University Press, 2010), is based on original research, which Dr. Perlman conducted between 1969 and 2009 in Rio's favelas. The book, which is now out in paperback, received a starred review in Publishers Weekly and won the 2010 PROSE Award in two categories.



Janice Perlman (USA) is an internationally renowned scholar and social entrepreneur in urban innovation and sustainability. She is the author of dozens of books, articles and policy papers. Her first book 'The Myth of Marginality: Urban Politics and Poverty in Rio de Janeiro' (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976) won the C. Wright Mills Award, has been translated into over a dozen languages, and has had a lasting impact on planning practice and public policy. The Mega-Cities Project, a transnational non-profit that Perlman founded in 1987 is working to "shorten the lag time between ideas and implementation in urban problem solving" by sharing successful approaches that work across national, cultural and community boundaries. Its current focus is on making the transition to the next generation of urban innovators who want to create socially and environmentally just cities. Currently she is completing an evaluation of 9 innovative slum upgrading and livelihoods projects in India and concluding research in Rio on the way favela residents and leaders are reacting to the massive new public policies — the Pacifying Police Units and the Plan for Accelerated Growth — which are leading up to the 2012 Earth Summit (Rio+20), the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games.

For further information see www.mega-cities.net



If you come close enough to Tia Rose's face, you will notice a sprinkling of dark brown microscopic freckles. They shine like distant stars on the universe of her smiling cheeks. They are the marks of memories, some happy, some sad. One of the darker ones says 'November 10th'.

It was a day that began like any other. Rose woke up early and prepared the salty snacks. Fifty squares of fresh white cheese dipped in yellow batter and fried in gold. When they had cooled, she placed them in the silver, insulated cooler bag — together with cans of *Guarana* and other sugary drinks — and hoisted it to her shoulders. Then she took a *motortaxi* downhill towards *asfalto* where she sold her *salgados* on the street. Jesse, her son, went off to school and later in the afternoon would play *pipa* with his friends from the neighborhood. Isabelle, her daughter, went next door to a neighbor's house to play and watch television. Black cats are bad luck, though, and watching television can be dangerous. That morning, with no apparent warning, the ever-entertaining television set exploded. The colorful light turned into lights of fire. Isabelle did not survive the electric shock, and Rose hardly survived the loss of her daughter. Isabelle is not the only victim of the 'High Voltage Monster'. The risky illegal business of tapping electricity from public street lamps has transformed many refrigerators, lamps, fans and other appliances into deadly killers. The 'High Voltage Monster' still strikes from time to time, and Rose's tears still fall. Sliding from freckle to freckle, leaving a wet trace on her chubby cheeks. The feeling of guilt is hard to get over. (*Repórter sem Beiras*)

HIGH VOLTAGE MONSTER

GATO

High Voltage Monster, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: 'High Voltage Monster', *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, October 28, 2010. This article is based on spending time with Tia Rose — living and working in the Figueiteiro favela, Rio de Janeiro, July 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Asfalto** — refers to asphalted i.e. paved streets. It's slang for indicating the places in Brazilian cities where the middle-classes live. **Gato** — is Brazilian slang for the act of pirating i.e. illegal tapping of public services such as water, electricity and the internet. **Guarana** — is the brand name of a Brazilian cola-like soft drink. It's made from the red Guarana berry that is found in the Amazon. **Motortaxi** — are taxi drivers on motorbikes. The streets in the favelas (if there are any) are very narrow: too narrow to accommodate automobiles. Most favelas are situated on hilltops and taking a motortaxi is the only practical way of getting up and down. **Pipa** — is the Brazilian word for 'kite'. **Salgado** — is a typical Brazilian salty snack, a fried pastry filled with cheese, shrimp or minced meat.



It's too hot to enjoy the scenery. I am sweating my way up the five hundred steps towards the little *mercado* on top of the hill, my eyes focused on the rhythm of the stairs. The chirping of a bird suddenly captures my attention, and I jerk my head upwards towards a clear blue sky. In *Gloria*, I am used to seeing a sky filigreed with a few lonely white lines; jet streams from the airplanes taking off from nearby Aeroporto Santos Dumont. Planes flying to 'want-to-be destinations'. Here in *Fogueteiro*, the sky is a grid of signature black lines. A chaotic grid of electric wires, connected and ramified. Each of them going in another direction, each of them ending up at another destination: one of the nearby shanties.

'Gato! Gaaaaaaato!', a little girl shouts as she merrily skips past me, on her way down the hill. I move my head again, this time from high-up thoughts to the lower land of reality. She's calling a cat that seems to be taking a lazy afternoon nap; sheltering her dark-tinted fur from the hot burning sun in the shade of a nearby street light. Her dirty fur is as black as the nest of wires above her. The sly cat, pretending to sleep, doesn't react to the little girl's calls. As soon as she is gone, the cat re-opens its bright yellow eyes. They focus again on the unraveled ball of wool in front of her. The wool is the same color as her fur; as black as the nest of wires above. With a hesitating, lazy gesture she continues her play with the ball of yarn, pawing at the tangle of black woolen threads.

The hill in *Fogueteiro* is mapped with a labyrinth of narrow corridors and connecting stairways. There are few 'proper streets' here, and the only way to get around

URBAN TREES

GATO

or access downtown *asfalto* is to hire a *motortaxi*. Because there are so few real streets, street lights too are in short supply. The few that exist look more like urban trees — big concrete trunks with a canopy of thick black wires branching out in every direction. Not only do these urban trees illuminate the streets at night, they are also a 24-hour source of energy for nearby families. Each wired branch that leaves the trunk, ends up in one of the neighboring shanties, supplying energy to power the 24-hour fridge, the 10-hour ventilator, the 9-hour radio, the 24-hour TV and, occasionally, the 24-hour lamp. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Urban Trees, from *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: 'Urban Trees', *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, October 28, 2010. This article is based on living and working in the *Fogueteiro* favela in Rio de Janeiro, July & August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Asfalto** — refers to asphalted i.e. paved streets. It's slang for indicating the places in Brazilian cities where the middle-classes live. **Fogueteiro** — is the name of a small favela in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the popular tourist quarter of Santa Theresa. **Gato** — is Brazilian for cat, as well as Brazilian slang for the act of pirating i.e. illegal tapping of public services such as water, electricity and the internet. **Gloria** — is a neighborhood in the city of Rio de Janeiro where lower-middle class people live, mostly in apartment blocks. **Mercado** — is Brazilian Portuguese for 'supermarket'. **Motortaxi** — are taxi drivers on motorbikes. The streets in the favelas (if there are any) are very narrow; too narrow to accommodate cars. Most favelas are situated on hilltops and taking a *motortaxi* is the only practical way of getting up or down.



They're all over the place. First you don't see any of them, but once you've noticed one, and then another one... it's hard 'not to see' them. I discovered the first one when I was standing at the top of the stairs, on the very top of the hill. I was looking out at the urban landscape, still breathing hard from climbing up the steep path. It was a winter day, early morning, and you could feel in the air that it was going to be a beautiful day. The sun had just risen and was spreading its first rays of light. It was the sun's reflection on the shiny white plastic skin of 'one of them' that caught my attention. My eyes re-focused from landscape to macro and started scrutinizing the shape of this strange creature. It had a stretched-out body shaped like a stiff worm, no arms, no legs. The head and tail looked identical. It was hard to tell if it was moving from left to right or from right to left. Was it even moving? Moving slowly, or standing still? Maybe it was even dead. Although it was pure white, there was a kind of ugliness in this plastic snake.

The sound of a helicopter distracted me, and when I looked again at the spot where I'd seen the creature, I saw more reflections and realized there were a lot more of these ugly strangers hiding on the hill. In fact, they were all over the place. Hordes of them. They were all different shapes. Big, sturdy ones and thin, graceful ones. Which were the females? Some were short, some were long and some were very long. They were all going somewhere, but in different directions. Some of them were going uphill, others downhill. Some were lined up next to each other, some on top of each other, some crossing over each other. They were

WHITE SNAKES

GATO

all secretly connected and, as such, took over the entire neighborhood.

Mostly they were sliding over the path. Some were attached to the red brick walls, scaling the roofs, sticking up in the air, or going down stairs. Eventually, they all ended up in one of the blue plastic water tanks decorating the field of rooftops. It was the point where the network ended. The period in the sentence. The place where they felt safe. The spot where they stopped to release their body fluids. A place where they guarded their most precious secret.

When I realized what they were actually concealing in those blue containers, I began to appreciate that the contribution of these ugly creatures was a matter of life and death for the community living on the hill. (Repórter sem Beiras)

White Snakes, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: 'White Snakes', *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, October 28, 2010. This article is based on living and working in the *Fogueteiro* favela in Rio de Janeiro, July & August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.



Hallelujah! Haaaaallelujah! screams the radio. An ugly square box, its back panel missing, reveals a tangle of black wires with a metal hatrack-cum-antenna sticking out on top — a skeleton of what was probably a normal radio in its earlier days. Tininha had found it on the trash dump and brought it home. After a minor technical ‘operation’, it was added to the family’s eclectic collection of home furnishings. That was five years ago. It now sits proudly on top of an old armoire, piles of colored clothing spilling out of its shelves. Since its ‘operation’, the radio has been possessed by the spirit of an Evangelical clergyman who shouts his message into the shanty, night and day, with the urgency of a sports commentator reporting on a football match. Hallelujah! Haaaaallelujah! he shouts through the night. Santos Spiritus!, Deus! and other words I don’t understand. Tininha’s grandson is sleeping through the clamor. I close my eyes and pull the blanket over my head, trying to ignore the light shining from a naked bulb in the ceiling. I push my ear deep into the pillow to block out the other voices. It’s past midnight when Tininha comes in. She has just finished dinner and joins us in the bedroom. Tininha’s clapboard shanty has two rooms. The back room is where everyone sleeps. One bed is shared by Tininha, her youngest daughter and the son of her oldest daughter. A second bed is used by her son and his girlfriend. Tininha’s husband only uses the bed in the day time after he comes home from his night shift in the factory. An old towel embroidered with a teddy bear is stretched over the door frame and divides the bedroom from the main room. The ‘living room’ is about the same

THE 24-HOUR RADIO

GATO

size as the bedroom and is where the family cooks, eats, works, talks and watches television. The toilet is located in a little quad outside the shack. After a while someone turns off the television in the next room and Luana, the youngest daughter, enters the room. She’s surprised to find me still awake and asks if she can turn off the light. ‘Sure!’, I say. ‘And, please, can you turn off the radio as well?’. Her reaction is one of alarm, as if what she’s been asked to do is not allowed. She glances hesitantly at the radio and turns down the volume just a bit. ‘Is this better?’, she asks. When I say yes, she switches off the light and turns up the volume on the radio like it was before. I listen to the hum of the fan and hear Luana searching for an empty spot in the bed. And then I hear the voice again. The Holy Radio. I wake up in the morning to the first rays of sunlight peeking through the chinks of the rough wooden planks of the

walls of the shanty. A little brown bird has also found it’s way through one of the cracks. A shiver of freedom goes through my body. I feel happy again, like a kid on a summer morning, waking up and going straight from bed to play in the green garden and green forest. But suddenly I realize there is no green garden in *Jardim Gramacho*. Here the ‘garden’ is packed with foul-smelling trash. Heavy-laden trucks, coming from the city center, bring tons and tons of waste to be dumped in the front yard of this little community, living on the edge of the world’s biggest trash heap. It’s a different garden and a different playground for the children in *Jardim Gramacho*. Babies take their first steps in a field of empty cans, and suck away their hunger on dirty plastic cups. Older kids spend their days in the fields of waste by collecting material that can be recycled and exchanged for a few centavos. Their work is supervised by an army of aggressive flies. The flies, however, aren’t the only ones eating trash. Some of the food gets collected, sometimes even resold in a nearby food stall.

I lay in bed and wonder about the Holy Radio. About the zealous clergyman and his preaching, and what these people have to rejoice in. (Repórter sem Beiras)

The 24-Hour Radio, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos Archive: 'The 24-Hour Radio', Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos, October 28, 2010. This article is based on spending time with Tininha — living and working in Jardim Gramacho, Rio de Janeiro, August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.*

Glossary **Jardim Gramacho** — is one of the world’s largest landfills and is located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro city. Next to the trash dump, people have erected illegal shanty settlements. Not only do these people live in the trash, they live off it as well. Families have started up small operations in their backyards where they recycle the trash coming from the city of Rio.



STEREO SCULPTURE

CHANGE

The setting is neat and sober: two chairs standing side by side, two sofas facing each other. The sofas are covered in a bright orange fabric which gives the room a certain vitality and a glow to the faded, peeling paint. A rusty nail protruding from the wall, marks the spot where a picture frame might once have hung. It exposes a layer of grey cement, like an open wound, where it enters the wall. Alfonso and Vitalina smile from a photograph taken as a young couple. In contrast is a gaudy painting of a 18th century sailboat, floundering in a stormy sea, capturing for eternity the moment before capsizing. The saturated colors and glitzy embellishments question the author’s sincerity and reveal its cheapness. The room’s main protagonists are the TV and Stereo. The sofas and chairs are aligned to face the television from which the much-admired *telenovelas* are broadcast daily. The TV sits on what appears to be a makeshift stand constructed of two simple, iron-frame chairs. One chair faces the room with the back leaning against the wall. The other stands next to it, turned — for no apparent reason — at a 90-degree angle. The two chairs support a large flat cardboard box on which the TV sits. The television is the same width as the chairs and looks much too heavy for the box. It is crowned with an 80’s-style pyramid antenna. Three aluminum pilers point in different directions hoping to catch a signal. A cluster of wires escapes from the back of the set, searching for a nearby socket. My eyes follow the wires from the back of the set to the floor, and up again to a small DVD player on the ground. Alfonso and Vitalina love music. The pitch black sound

sculpture has five layers. On the bottom is a CD player, most likely broken. Above it is a double set of cassette recorders, an amplifier, and another CD player. A strange-looking turntable tops the plastic cake. The five layers are all integrated into a square-shaped sculpture. It sits on a pedestal made out of two immense speakers. The black plastic finish on the speakers has lost its shine. The symmetrical construction is spoiled by one of the speaker’s membranes which hangs at a crooked angle, similar to the floundering ship at sea. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Stereo Sculpture, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos Archive: 'Stereo Sculpture', Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos, March 31, 2011. This article is based on spending time with Vitalina — living in the Cidade Nova, Rio de Janeiro, August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.*

Glossary **Telenovelas** — is the word for Brazilian TV soap operas .



With mixed feelings of sadness and alarm, I overlook the battlefield. I am standing on a small plateau, the top of a deserted hill. What seemed to me — from far away — like nature’s quiet beauty, evaporates upon my arrival. A thick layer of pitch-black soil covers the hill, revealing its dark secret and contents — a mass of decomposed, burned body parts. Here and there, a few cadavers lay intact, contrasting with the undefined background. Most of the cadavers are from the *Mus Musculus* family, otherwise known as the house mouse. I observe the lifeless body of a white one, close to my feet. Its snow-white fur, sullied with fingerprints, indicates a struggle for survival. A single black, bullet-shaped eye stares lifelessly from the middle of its body. Part of its tail has been lost in the battle, tiny thin wires stick out where it’s been cut off.

The tail of this mouse, once its umbilical cord, was its connection to the virtual world. Its body, guided by the user’s hand, was a tool for creating words and pictures on a flashy screen; for selecting and performing complex tasks. When the tail was severed, the mouse no longer functioned as a pointing device and the connection with the virtual world was lost. It was banished to an underworld of death, dirt and trash. Another dead mouse has a blue butterfly tattooed on its belly. It too is minus a tail. Its neighbor is in a more advanced state of decay. Part of the body has been torn off, exposing its internal mechanism. A black one, of a standard design, also shows signs of injury. Further-away, a posh, silver mouse has a brand name covering its entire body. Later I notice a green-eyed one, hiding

THE MASSACRE OF MICE

WRECKS

in the pale brown grass at the edge of the plateau. It looks quite intact and I wonder if it’s still alive and trying to escape.

The mice have been sorted according to type. Their damaged bodies, trashed for recycling, were discarded like the wrapping on a candy bar. The *Mus Musculus* is a member of the super-family *Muroidea*; the little brother of the *Rattus rattus*. Its single black eye, sometimes oval-shaped, sometimes round, reveals its poor eyesight and nocturnal lifestyle. It lives in the world of human trash and spreads disease. It is useless and dangerous, and therefore, exterminated.

This ‘Zoo of Dead’ hosts other gadgets as well. Among them broken Nintendo remote controls, telephone receivers, the sole-plates of iron appliances... all waiting to be burned. The cycle is self-perpetuating — people

dump trash, the trash attracts flies, the flies produce larva, the larva become flies, people dump trash. And so it goes. (Repórter sem Beiras)

The Massacre of Mice, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘The Massacre of Mice’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, November 25, 2010. This article is based visits in Jardim Gramacho, Rio de Janeiro, August 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Jardim Gramacho** — is one of the world’s largest landfills and is located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro city. Next to the trash dump, people have erected illegal shanty settlements. Not only do these people live in the trash, they live off it as well. Families have started up small operations in their backyards where they recycle the trash coming from the city of Rio. **Muroidea** — is a large super-family of rodents. It includes hamsters, gerbils, true mice and rats, and many other relatives. **Mus musculus** — is the Latin name for house mouse. It’s the best known and most common mouse species. **Rattus rattus** — is the Latin name for ‘black rat’.



Baiano is the kind of person who is always at home. He likes having people drop over unexpectedly. Just to say ‘hi’ or have a chat. But whenever I make an actual appointment to go visit him, he’s never there. It was one of those times. I had told him I’d come at 11. When I arrived and saw the door closed, I knew he was gone and I could either sit down and wait or go back home. I decided to wait. I sat down to rest on a solitary rock beside the barraco, overlooking the scenery from *Fogueteiro*’s hilltop. Below were a cluster of haphazardly erected *barracos* that gradually faded into the regular urban grid of buildings at the bottom of the hill. I starred for a long time at this landscape of blurred shapes and colors. In the distance I could hear firecrackers, an announcement perhaps of a police raid, probably at *Morro de Prazer*, the neighboring hill. I anticipated the noise of a helicopter and shooting, but all I could hear were the sounds of a barking dog, children playing, and music blaring from a neighbor’s house. I could smell burning plastic — someone was burning trash — there is no public garbage collection on the *morro*. It was approaching midday, the sun was getting stronger. I tried to cover my head in the shade of an old cracked wall. The shade formed a trapezoid-like carpet on the dusty soil. A curved line of ants kept me company. I first heard about ‘Baiano’ when I encountered his car somewhere in a lost corner of the *morro*. The rusty wreck of his old VW minibus had two flat tires. It made the car lean back against the wall beside it, like an old man trying to stand on tired skinny legs. The sharp glass splinters of its broken window didn’t seem to bother

WAITING FOR BAIANO

RAIN

the children who played with the car as if it were a toy. Its pale surface, like the worm-out skin of an old man, showed spots of brown rust alongside spray-painted letters in fluorescent green that spelled ‘B A I A N O’. Asking Baiano a question usually begins with a big smile, followed by a long monologue. Baiano likes talking. He’s always talking. I asked him about his name. ‘If it was his real name?’. Baiano used to live in *Bahia*, a region northeast of Brazil, about two thousand kilometers from Rio. At the age of 21, he decided to drive his VW minibus from *Bahia* to Rio de Janeiro in search of a job and a better life. By the time he arrived in the ‘*Big City*’, his car had broken down. After living for some months on the streets, he moved to the *morro* and people from *Fogueteiro* started calling him Baiano, ‘from *Bahia*’. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Waiting for Baiano, from: *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos* Archive: ‘Waiting for Baiano’, *Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos*, February 24, 2011. This article is based on spending time with Baiano — living in the *Fogueteiro* favela, Rio de Janeiro, July 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Bahia** — is a region in the northeast of Brazil. **Barracos** — or shanties are the names given to the poorly-constructed dwellings in favelas. **Big City** — refers to Rio de Janeiro. **Fogueteiro** — is the name of a small favela in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the popular tourist quarter of Santa Theresa. **Morro** — is Brazilian for ‘hill’. Favelas are mostly located on hills and the word ‘morro’ is a nicer word for favela. **Morro de Prazer** — is a favela on the opposite hill of the *Fogueteiro* favela. Morro de Prazer literally translated means ‘Hill of Pleasure’.



I sit here at the kitchen table in my role as ‘reporter’, trying to write down another story. I’ve written this story many times in my head while waiting for the bus, washing the dishes or taking a shower. Repeating the same sentence over and over again, deleting words, replacing words until I think I’ve got it right. Unfortunately, the ‘save’ button in my brain does not work as well as the one on my computer. I take a sip of coffee trying to recall those words and phrases, the thoughts that came to mind while wandering through the city, often oblivious to the people around me — a street vendor selling *tapioca* pancakes or a beggar looking for a handout. The kitchen is my office. The room is about four meters square, just big enough for a table, a cupboard, a refrigerator and a stove. There’s no room for a chair, so I use a stool that stores easily under the kitchen table. A single small window, high in the wall, faces a courtyard surrounded by a group of apartment blocks. Because it’s on the second floor, the apartment gets little natural light. Even in the daytime it’s dark. The only light fixture in the kitchen is an ugly neon bulb. During the day it feels like a tiled prison. At night, the sound of people and voices coming through the open window makes it almost cosy. Every night around nine o’clock, I listen to the evening ritual of my neighbor taking a shower. The sound of running water is interrupted by his singing and snorting. Elsewhere in the building someone is playing the tuba. Nice melodies. I think it’s a man playing, but it might be a woman. I am thankful these and other sounds muffle the drone of the refrigerator, which is louder than the flickering neon light. From time to time, I hear an empty

REPORTER

CHANGE

can tossed down the chute five or six stories above into a trash collector in the basement. The tinkling of it bouncing off the walls is strangely beautiful. Garbage bags are duller and not so interesting. I sip a glass of wine and start to think of you. I think about my friends going about their lives halfway around the world. How can I explain to them the thoughts I’m experiencing? The smells and feelings It reminds me of searching on my computer for those unwritten stories, the bits and fragments still in my head. Am I a good reporter? Sometimes it’s the distractions that I report best... (Repórter sem Beiras)

Reporter, from: Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos Archive: ‘Reporter’, Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos, March 31, 2011. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Tapioca** – in Brazil, the term refers to a kind of pancake made with manioc starch and water, then filled with different ingredients such as coalho cheese, grated coconut, sun-dried meat, bananas, or goiabada.



After struggling through a long painful life, the charger for my laptop finally gave out. The beginning of the end was about two years ago. I was trying to finish a project a couple of hours before catching a flight to Tirana. My concentration dissolved when the smell of burning plastic started to penetrate my nose. As I looked down under the table, I saw my little charger sending emergency signals in the shape of long thin trails of smoke. By the time I came back from Albania, my father, an ingenious handyman, had fixed it. The only problem was that I could never leave its side when plugged into the electricity for fear of my house burning down. Sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night wondering if I had unplugged it in my office. I would lie awake counting sheep for an hour or more until finally — dragging myself half asleep to the car and then driving to Brussels in the middle of the night — I would find the charger unplugged. I’d then drive home, exhausted, but relieved, and climb into my cold bed. Early upon my arrival in Rio, a year or two later, the charger would only work if I held the cord in a certain position. After getting tired of holding it and typing with one hand, I devised a solution using Scotch tape and a clothespin. This solution lasted for two weeks until one day it finally really did die. Since I couldn’t live without my computer, and my computer couldn’t live without a charger, I went searching. As it turned out, there was only one place in all of Rio de Janeiro where the type of charger I needed for my laptop was sold — *Ipanema*.

I decide to celebrate my purchase, the new charger, with a little walk on the beach in *Ipanema*. It’s a sunny winter

ARAB STRANGER

RAIN

day; a brisk cold wind is blowing; the beach is rather empty. I take off my flip flops and let the cold sand slide through my toes as I walk in the direction of the *Morro Dois Irmãos*. There in the distance, a man in a white costume is waving at me. Delighted by the spontaneous greeting, I wave back and continue walking. A moment later I hear someone shouting and yelling. As I turn around, I see the same man, dressed in a white robe and headscarf, running towards me. I look left and right to make sure it’s not me he’s targeting, but with no one else around, it’s clear it is. He keeps on shouting and running in my direction. His robe, which is way too big for him, is clumsy, and the heavy refrigerated box he is carrying makes it hard for him to run in the sand. He almost falls. Not sure if it’s a mirage, my imagination or just some crazy guy, I look around to see if anyone else has

noticed. The few people nearby are all staring in amazement. The surreal situation makes me wonder, ‘Should I run?’, ‘Should I be afraid?’ The man stops about an arms-length in front of me. He’s very close. He’s completely out of breath and sweating. He puts his heavy box down and looks me right in the eyes. He smiles, and then frowns. Suddenly, I recognize Baiano’s black face in the Arab garb. I shout his name; we embrace, laugh, hug and fall to our knees in the sand. I would certainly have recognized Baiano among a thousand faces on the beach in *Ipanema* and certainly not in such an outrageous costume. Nor did I expect to find him selling salty snacks to tourists, for he’s the one who always wanted to be a gardener, dreaming of making the green world greener. As we recover our composure, the people on the beach around us stop staring. He offers me a *salgado* and we sit on the beach for a long time, talking. (Repórter sem Beiras)

Arab Stranger, from: Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos Archive: ‘Arab Stranger’, Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos, February 24, 2011. This article is based on spending time with Baiano — living in the Figueiro favela, Rio de Janeiro, July 2010. Written by Repórter sem Beiras.

Glossary **Ipanema** — is a known beach district in the South Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro. **Morro** — is Brazilian for ‘hill’. Favelas are mostly located on hills and the word ‘morro’ is a nicer word for favela. **Morro Dois Irmãos** — is a hill situated between the favela of Rocinha and the favela of Vidigal, located in Leblon, in the South Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro. **Salgado** — is a typical Brazilian salty snack, a fried pastry filled with cheese, shrimp or minced meat.

BLACK WIRES



Time is changing and there is no escape. We are all changing. The natural world is shrinking, while cities are expanding and new urban structures are appearing. Favelas are changing as well. At this moment, more then ever, their structure, function and definition. Some favelas are being torn down in order to make way for new buildings, ‘real buildings’. New slums are cropping up in places that were deserted just a minute ago. Whenever local elections draw near, city governments propose new services in the slums, utilities such as water and electricity, and paving the streets. With the World Cup (2014) and Olympic Games (2016) approaching, the government of Rio de Janeiro has started to interfere in the favelas of the city’s south zone; the favelas the tourists see. Cable cars, elevators and funicular are being built to facilitate transportation. The improvements being invested in are visible ones, but what about the invisible needs of the favela? Things like good education and changing the perception towards favela dwellers and treating them as equals.

Change can be ambiguous; for everything that is gained, something is lost. As the government embarks on ‘cleaning up’ the favelas in the south zone and ridding them of the drug gangs, formerly corrupt policemen *are* now suddenly ‘new friends’ with the favela residents. They are the ones in charge now and defining the rules. At the same time, the drug gangs — who are invisible — try to enforce their rules. It confuses the people. They don’t know who to believe. The favelas are stressed. With the drug gangs physically gone, the system that once kept the favela livable breaks down and allows new crime to enter. As the favelas become drug and weapons-free, more and more tourists make their way there. They do their superficial favela safari, take their pictures and leave. There is little interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the favela communities. The fact that favelas are now open to the outside world doesn’t necessarily mean that the outside world is open to favela. Favelas are changing, for better or for worse.

Repórter sem Beiras, 2011

Repórter sem Beiras

Jornal de Artigos Não Lidos (Journal of Unread Articles) is a journal made by Repórter sem Beiras. The project deals with the negative perception attributed to the communities living in favelas — Brazilian slums. It deals with questions as how to break down this stereotype and communicate a broader view and sense of personal identity. As a follow-up to her research in the Brazilian slums, the reporter visualized stories in this journal that go beyond the stories that are distributed by the media.

www.reporter-sem-beiras.info

Colophon

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