

Visualizing a Narrative

Through the Eyes of the Marginalized

by Jananda Lima

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Abstract

This research seeks to create a counter-narrative to the story of marginalization of favela's territory and people. By adopting the perspective of the marginalized as a starting point, the focus is to draw attention to the system, leading people to a new comprehension of it.

The primary approach in this study is Design Action Research, combined with Foresight. The result is a diagram of the system that perpetuates the marginalization and criminalization of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (based on the perceptions of favelados) and a proposal for a cultural shift to move forward to effective, disruptive, and collective changes.

Keywords: favela, slum, marginalization, criminalization, inequality, Brazil, causal layered analysis, system, the epistemology of the south, decolonial, design, foresight, innovation.

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To Taketo and Neto

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Preface

This paper follows academic writing rules. However, I have taken the liberty of writing in the first person in a few points throughout the story. My involvement with this research has many levels of complexity and “Learnings from the field” could only be expressed as a personal experience. Furthermore, in the “Zeitgeist – Understanding the spirit of the times” I explain the rationale for collaborating with Tieni Meninato. As a project that seeks to build bridges between different types of knowledge, I am convinced that this is an appropriate manner to transmit the discoveries of my process.

The citations and quotes throughout the paper are from academics (including favelados), activists, and favela residents as their knowledge are of equal value. Nevertheless, favela residents voices have a substantial presence in the chapter “System Diagram,” constructed based on their interpretation of the marginalization and criminalization of their communities.

The terms “favela,” “favelado,” and “Black,” that I am using in this paper, can be controversial. My decision to use them was made based on conversations I had with representants of favelas and from the Black community, and my MRP advisors. Using other terms would sound euphemisms, meaning that it gives a sense that such words are derogatory terms. This research adopts terms that respect all of those who are fighting

to change the narratives that marginalize such groups. Black is used with capital B because it refers to an identity, to belong to a culture. It is about ancestrality of enslaved Africans sent to the Americas.

Retail drug trafficking is another term that is not usual, but from this research viewpoint, the drug business in favelas is a retail market, while the production and the bulk of drugs sale take place in other territories.

Whenever the word “equality” appears in this paper, it does not refer to equal numbers nor equal benefits. It recognizes that we do not all stand at the same starting point. It speaks about the reparation of enormous disparities that happened throughout history and up to today to groups, in this specific case, of the poor and Black Brazilian population.

The context of the research topic was somehow previously known to me, being Brazilian and having lived in Rio de Janeiro for seventeen years. This fact might reflect the decisions I made during this investigation process.

Introduction

Motivations

Johnatha, a Mangueiras resident, was nineteen years old when the police killed him while he was on his way home. The mainstream newspapers showed only the police version of the story, that affirmed that Johnatha was the author of gunshots against the UPP headquarters. During her testimony, the soldier Larissa da Rocha referred to the victim as a “trafficker” several times, even though there was no evidence of involvement of the youngster with trafficking, which was reaffirmed by all the residents who witnessed the moment when he was hit from behind while passing through the conflict zone in the community.

“Much worse than the pain of the loss, is to see my son criminalized, marginalized because they [the police] do so with the endorsement of this prejudiced society” – Ana Paula Oliveira, Johnatha’s mother (Oliveira & Ribeiro, 2015, 9’40”).

This is one amongst thousands of stories of the assassination of innocent Black youngsters from favelas. Frequently, favela and favelado (a native or resident of a favela) are used as derogatory terms. An entire population living in these geographic dimensions is stigmatized. The majority of people prefer to use the word “community” as a euphemism to refer to a favela.

It might seem that today's favelas challenges are more significant than just a nomenclature issue, after all, they are dealing with life threats daily, but this specific problem is just a factual representation of numerous other challenges that the favelas hold. The narratives approaching favelas reinforce the stereotype of a dangerous territory constituted by criminals, desensitizing society's view and making no correlation to other experiences that comprise such spaces. Marginalizing and criminalizing favela territories and people is not only enabling necropolitics but creating a ripple effect not accounting for these people's lives.

This is one of the symptoms of a world in collapse. From a global perspective, consumption lifestyles are reinforced by ego-identity, which in turn is reinforcing a competitive mindset. Consumer capitalism has been developed by the growing demands of neoliberalism, marginalizing those with limitations to consume (Scharmer & Kaeufer, 2014) (Bauman, 2008).

Today's dominant problems are tangential to inequality and urbanization processes. Most innovators are basing smart cities' foundations onto technology, whereas it should be built upon people's basic needs for dignity, sovereignty, inclusion, and connection while using technology as a tool to reach these purposes.

In order to solve complex problems, we need to start asking contextualized questions. Favelas are different amongst themselves; each one of them has its characteristics and peculiarities. However, the majority of them share in common the profile of a social system laboratory, where patterns of oppression are concentrated, where they are most visible, and where they happen at a fast pace. But not only that, favelas represent the diversity that Brazil was built upon and creativity as a consequence of a population that have to find their means to survive and coexist in a hostile environment. Public policies are not fit for their reality, even though they are a considerable part of the city – 86 percent of the neighbourhoods in Rio have favelas; one in five Rio residents live in a favela (Santos, 2018).

Favelas are places where we can develop social technologies that can help to solve the demands of the favelas themselves, as well as outside of them.

Social technology is a relatively recent term used in Brazil to describe techniques, processes, and methods that combine science and technology with popular knowledge and is applied to solve social problems in a participatory and democratic way. It is usually replicable and appropriated by communities that seek sovereignty due to its simplicity, low cost, and easy applicability.

“The greatest innovation we can make right now is to listen to the voices of the favelas and peripheries, with active listening, real empathy, breaking away from historical stereotypes, to realize that the change will not come with armour and helicopters but with rights and life guarantees in favelas and peripheries.” – Raull Santiago (2019)

Aligned with an epistemology that combines different worlds and knowledge, the narrative is a crucial starting point to a larger project of significant changes. With that in mind, this research seeks a human-centered approach of design, that can only be achieved by bringing my whole self to the experience. Building connections with people helped to shape this study and, more importantly, was a critical outcome that changed not only the future of this research but the future of my career as a researcher.

Initially, activists and community leaders from favelas were contributing to their perception of the marginalization of their communities, putting particular emphasis on the types of relationships and power dynamics. During the exercise to build the system, it became clear that the marginalization and exclusion are much more situated than acknowledged by popular politics. This exercise not only helped to create a counter-narrative by telling a story from a different perspective, but it also led people to a new comprehension of the system in which they are inserted themselves. These new comprehensions are the outset for other projects that open space for changes and emerging futures.

Research Question

The research question started as “What is the perception of favelados, regarding the system that perpetuates their marginalization?”. After understanding how the system works using design engagement, commonly called co-creation with my co-researchers, – the favelados – I moved the focus of the study to understand why the system is pushing the poor and Black population to its margins. While uncovering the myths that drive a malfunctioning society and the potential shift to more balanced power dynamics, the primary question evolved to:

How might design co-creation play a role in deconstructing the system of oppression of favelados?

The previous question was turned into a secondary question in the research.

Methodology

Epistemology & Ontology

My ontological stance is drawn from my empathic disposition as a designer and the belief in human equality and freedom. At the same time, these ideas are connected to a dialectical conception that sees the world as a layered, interrelated system, a chain of relationships and processes (Gadotti, 1996; Ollman, 2003; Sayers, 1990), in which its dynamics shape the relationships of oppression (Glass, 2001).

As a design researcher, my ways of knowing are to inform direct knowledge of experience (existential), interpreted by design (interpretive). I am strongly influenced by epistemologies that take into account theory as part of praxis as Paulo Freire stated: “Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1970, p. 36).

Design approach

Why use a design approach instead of sticking with social science epistemologies and methodologies? Apart from being my background, design working for change offers more resources to merge theory with practice. The rationale behind it is that we have new problems, so we need different approaches to it.

“We cannot solve problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” – Albert Einstein

As defined by Richard Buchanan, “design is the human power of conceiving, planning, and making products that serve human beings in the accomplishment of their individual and collective purposes.” (2001, p.9). Design creates new ways of living and thinking, and for that reason, the cultural and the political agenda cannot be removed from the design, even when it claims neutrality.

This study starts from the standpoint that: One, people involved in the system that design is affecting should be involved in the design process. Two, when a group working together bring their different knowledge and life experiences to the table, they are bringing valuable resources into the design process; and three, social design works as a cog, acting with all the forces present in the system. The goal is to endeavour through less dichotomic concepts and to build bridges between different worlds.

Having that said, co-design will be used as the primary approach in this research, taking into account that all people involved will invest their knowledge and work on the research and (more importantly) will get knowledge from it as well.

“Those affected by a design should have a say in the design process.”
(Bjögvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren, 2012 p.3)

A decolonial perspective on design

We live in a diverse world, but the post-modernist and globalizing Euro-Western mindset expect other cultures to follow them by creating desire through design. Notwithstanding, how are strategic tools and methods addressing the different cultures, mindsets and power dynamics for social change? Although it is preached as leverage to social equity, design methodologies are mostly being created and developed from the same Eurocentric mindset — which has shaped the relations between the West and other cultures for centuries.

As this research pursues to converge academic and popular experiences, it was necessary to look for ways to recognize different manners to understand the world, as well as an ethical-political orientation of learning aligned with the epistemology of this research, therefore, the use of a “decolonial perspective” to address this study.

In “Epistemologies of the South” (ES), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) states that we are facing modern problems for which there are no longer sufficient modern solutions. ES framework also claims that the diversity of

the world is infinite. It is about social transformation to emerge from the combination of different worlds.

“It does not claim to have arrived at a new land of general theories and Big Ideas—in fact, this is explicitly not one of its goals—yet at the same time it dares to outline trajectories for thinking otherwise, precisely because it carves a space for itself that enables thought to re-engage with life and attentively walk along the amazing diversity of forms of knowledge held by those whose experiences can no longer be rendered legible by Eurocentric knowledge in the academic mode, if they ever were.” (Escobar, 2016, p.13).

Searching for the emergence of various forms of knowledge, ES is appropriate to guide this research as favelas can be one of the infinite worlds in the “pluriverse” – a term deriving from the concept of a world where many worlds fit, inspired by the Zapatista movement.

All people involved in this study brings a set of knowledge from different worlds and different experiences themselves, or in other words, this disposition does not suggest that specific actors bring specific forms of knowledge.

Methods & Techniques

Even though the epistemology of this research is about connecting different worlds, it would be quite challenging to use dialogic methods and techniques in this case. As much as it would be significant to put different stakeholders to connect, it would be impractical in the timeframe of this research. That is so because it requires preparation of the participants and the researcher. Even by doing that, it would still be unattainable to put together retail drug traffickers with military police officers in the same room, for instance. For these reasons, this research sets favelados perspectives on their marginalization as the starting point of the study.

An ongoing objective is to contemplate how the structure of academic research might fit into people’s lives to assess knowledge rather than to expect them to mold into established frameworks and disciplines. In this search, the methods and techniques used to support this research were:

Desk Research

Desk research method was present in all phases of the project. It was essential to learn what had been done in the past, regarding the subject matter of this study to gain a broad understanding of the field before

organizations, as a guest speaker at public events, been interviewed by a public news channel, being a member of an activist collective that has declared their vision or having their opinions posted on social media.

The invitations were sent communicating that their travel expenses would be compensated as a way to show the seriousness of the research and to enable many of the participants to attend the workshop.

It was essential to have people that lived in different favelas of the city. Even though these communities have their features, diversity was imperative to either validate the commonalities in the system or to raise differences. For this reason, the workshop took place in a building outside of a favela, in a non-profit private institution that operates as a community center.

Favelas in Rio de Janeiro were created in a subversive manner; until nowadays many rental agreements are verbal. There are barely formal addresses, and in most households, there is no formal contract with the hydroelectric company. That said, the need for their signature could be perceived as a formalization of their commitment in a way that could not be taken back. Therefore, I made sure that a verbal consent method was used, rather than signing a consent form, which could be viewed as a colonizing approach.

The workshop started with participants and facilitators creating their badges using art supplies. The next step was to present the creations as a way to break the ice and at the same time to share each other's stories, backgrounds, and fun facts. Having the participants to open themselves contributed to building a trusting and comfortable environment from the beginning, as we had challenging topics to address ahead.

The participants were divided into two different groups of five, avoiding to have people from the same community in the same group, to enrich the experience. Before they started working together, the facilitator explained the overall purpose of that workshop and what it means, in the research context, to build the system that perpetuates the marginalization and the criminalization of the favelas, giving concrete examples of situations that they regularly face for being favelados.

As a way to simplify the complexity of what they were about to build, the facilitator first asked the participants to make a list of the actors that were part of that system. Next, they were asked to display the actors on a large sheet on their table in any desired fashion (using art and office supplies provided) and to identify the connections between the stakeholders. Last, the participants should identify the types of relationship or power dynamics that interfere with the narrative in the context of favelas and to represent it on the map.

The first group to present decided to build a map with figurines and to

identify the different types of relationships by drawing lines in different colours and patterns (Figure 1). The second group presented their understanding of the system differently. They used a timeline with historical facts that led the system to today's circumstances (Figure 2).

During the final considerations, some participants spontaneously shared their thoughts about the activity. One spoke about how the exercise was essential for her to have a clear understanding of her context. A second person expressed her happiness in meeting many interesting people and how she immediately connected to one specific participant. A third person voiced that she felt treated with care being part of a research that was compensating the participants, that was taking place in a room with air conditioner (summertime can be unbearable without it in Rio), and with foods and drinks carefully planned by a nutritionist. Lastly, a participant shared that not only she appreciated the knowledge exchange during the session but also had fun while creating the storytelling of their world.

The outcomes of the workshop are presented in the “Timeline” and the “System Diagram” sections.

Collaborative CLA

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is a framework and practice for organizational, social and civilizational change. It is a futures research method designed not necessarily to predict but to create space for transformation.

A collaborative CLA was created with Tieni Meninato, a fellow SFI graduate investigating why designers who practice co-design still often struggle to collaborate. We have co-written this section and the ones referring to the finds of the CLA. We created our own version of this method in order to fit better our unique challenge that sought to uncover core issues that sustain seemingly unrelated cultural symptoms, such as my query of how design can play a role in deconstructing systems of marginalization.

Cultural-Historical Context

This section clarifies the current state of the research world by pointing out the main elements of Brazil and favelas cultural-historical context. Along with the timeline, this elucidation also uses the findings from the “Zeitgeist” section to interpret situations that serve as background for the study.

Timeline

Although the first favela did not appear until the late 19th century, many events that preceded it were essential to understanding today’s context, hence the timeline includes events starting from the 1500s, as well as events that may not seem directly connected to the topic of this study, but somehow they help to uncover the power dynamics of today’s scenario.

Taking into account Freire’s ontological feature of the practice of freedom starting with people’s historicity, a timeline was needed as an adhesive guide to ground this research. It supports an understanding of the situation as not fatalistically or unchangeable.

The correlation of historical facts gives us not only hints of individual behaviours, but also provides a better comprehension of a system of oppression, including how racism prevailed in history, how it led to the criminalization of the poor, and how society is reinforcing this mindset of oppression until the present day. Lists of facts are provided below, to walk us through the main pieces of evidence of the timeline, but a more in-depth interpretation of such pieces is present in the next sections.

Racism

If we observe some facts in the timeline, we can understand how racism became systematic:

- Colonization that reinforced a strict vertical hierarchy;
- The delegation of manual labour to enslaved Africans;
- Creation of the police to protect private property owners and the royal family, afraid that the slave workforce would start a revolt;
- The ostracism of the Black population through lack of policies after slavery was abolished;
- Laws designed to repress culture expressions with African roots;
- Government incentives European immigration after slavery was abolished.

Criminalization of the poor

The oppression and criminalization of the poor starts with different forms of violence committed against this population:

- Laws that protect the police from responding to the killing of innocents;
- The end of the military dictatorship led the police to concentrate their oppression towards the poor;
- Expansion of the retail drug trafficking in favelas;
- Creation of UPPs;
- Loose laws that leave to the judge to interpret who is a drug trafficker;
- More rigid anti-drug laws increasing the Black population in prisons;
- Displacement of Favelas for the Summer Olympics for aesthetic purposes.

The return of the conservative mindset

The frustration with the economic and political scenario and the fear of losing privilege led the population to look at the past with a nostalgic feeling, electing a far right-wing president. Here is the list of the main facts:

- Military dictatorship
- Stabilization of economy with Plano Real;
- Poverty reduction widened university access to Black students, and strengthened rights for housemaids;
- Economic and political crises strike Brazil;
- Privilege threatened with reduction of racial and gender inequality;
- Conservative candidate elected president.

1500s

Portuguese Colonization

Reading and writing knowledge were restricted to the Jesuits, who interpreted the bible to the colonized. The Catholic ideal of contemplativeness reinforced manual labour being delegated to slaves.

Slavery

First enslaved Africans trafficked to Bahia (Northern Brazil)

1600s

Quilombo dos Palmares

Space of resistance, created by fugitive slaves who sought to reconstruct the traditional forms of political, social, cultural, and kinship association existing in Africa.

1800 - 1849

Portuguese Monarchy goes to Rio

Threatened by the invasion of Napoleon, the Portuguese royal family goes to Rio de Janeiro.

Peak of Slavery

Over half of Rio's population was enslaved, the entire economy depended on them.

The military police are created

The coat of arms has a crown, two firearms in front of a sugar cane plant and a coffee plant. The plants are a representation of the Brazilian ruling class at the time. Created to protect the royal family and the private property owners.

Independence of Brazil

1850 - 1899

1st favela

Soldiers from Canudos war first set up a camp on a hill in Rio creating the first favela in Brazil.

End of the intercontinental slave trade

Slavery Abolished in Brazil

no public policies were created to include this population regarding education, health, housing, and all structural problems

Capoeira is outlawed

1900 - 1950

European Immigration Peak

Farmers did not want to employ and pay salaries to former slaves

Many thinkers and politicians believed that immigration would open doors to the gradual “whitening” of the Brazilian population. The government create incentives to encourage the arrival of labour from Europe.

Law Proposal to prohibit the entry of Black people into the country

Drugs Prohibition

Prohibited the production, trafficking and consumption of narcotics.

“Drug addiction” became a disease subjected to compulsory reclusion.

Vadiagem Law

A law to detain those who were “idle when being able to work, without an income to secure sufficient means of subsistence, or those providing their subsistence through illicit occupation.”

1960s

Military Coup

Publication of Institutional Act 5. Brazil’s president, army general Artur da Costa e Silva, closed Congress and state legislatures, arrest opposition politicians, and revoke their political rights.

In the following two decades the dictatorship suppressed freedom of speech and dissidents, disappearing some 475 people, and torturing thousands more.

1980s

Formation of Falange Vermelha Gang

The coexistence of political prisoners and common criminals in the Ilha Grande Prison (Rio de Janeiro) created a relationship that taught the gang's founders to unite and organize themselves in search of profitable criminal alternatives, such as bank robbery.

Formation of the 1st drug gang

Banks defended themselves with effective strategies, leading the bad guys to venture into the drug-trafficking business.

Expansion of the retail drug trafficking

Favoured by the governor of Rio, Leonel Brizola, that from 1983 suspended the action of the police in the favelas.

1990s

Drug Gangs War

Drug gangs become powerful and start a war to control more territories of the city

Restoration of Democratic Elections

First elections for president by direct popular ballot

Plano Real

A set of measures taken to stabilize the Brazilian economy led by the Minister of Finance Fernando Henrique Cardoso

Fernando H. Cardoso President of Brazil

The first Brazilian president to be reelected for a subsequent term

2000 - 2004

Precedent No. 70

To condemn persons based exclusively on the word of the police, without any complementary evidence.

Lula da Silva President of Brazil

The first part of his government reduced poverty, widened university access to Black students, and strengthened rights for housemaids.

2005 - 2009

Drug Trafficking Becomes Heinous Crime

1st UPP

Installed in Morro Santa Marta, South Zone of Rio, to bring permanent policing to the favela, aiming to end violence and territorial dominance of retail drug trafficking.

Lula da Silva Re-elected President of Brazil.

2010 - 2015

Racial quotas law is implemented in Brazilian universities

Rafael Braga arrested

During a mass protest in Rio, Rafael, a semi-literate, poor, Black young man was arrested for carrying two bottles of cleaning products.

2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil

Dilma Rousseff Elected Twice President of Brazil

Brazil Economic Crisis

2016

Rafael Braga 2nd arrest

He was approached by police officers and questioned about retail drug traffickers in the favela where he resided with his mother because he had an electronic anklet. Refusing to cooperate, he was arrested with cocaine and marijuana, forged by the police, he said.

Brazil 3rd in prison population rank

727,000 prisoners

Summer Olympics in Rio

Military Occupation of the City

The goal was not the security of the inhabitants of these places or the extension of the access to public services, but the control of the poor and Black population.

Displacement of Favelas

More than 77,000 people were evicted from their homes in Rio. Some favelas were displaced simply for being too close to the games' venues.

Crivella Rio's Mayor

Elected with 1,7 million votes, 59.3%

Dilma Rousseff Impeached

Vice President Michel Temer assumed her powers and duties as Acting President of Brazil.

2017

Marielle Franco Murdered

The member of Rio City Council denounced three murders in the days before her assassination

Bolsonaro President of Brazil

Elected with 57,7 million votes, 55.5%

Wilson Witzel Governor of Rio de Janeiro

Elected with 4,6 million votes, 59.8%

2018

Marielle Franco Murdered

The member of Rio City Council denounced three murders in the days before she was assassinated by a military police officer and a former military police officer.

Brazil

Cultural constitution

When Brazil was colonized, all education was under the responsibility of the Catholic Church. The Bible was read and interpreted for the people. In other words, the comprehension of the world was regulated by the Church. While to protestants idleness was a sin, the ideal of the Iberian aristocracy was to lead a life in which manual labour was not a necessity, and the Catholic ideal of contemplativeness reinforced manual labour in Brazil being delegated to slaves (Karnal, 2007). Colonization and slavery markedly shaped the historical construction of Brazilian society, giving personal characteristics to its social structure and power relations. Undoubtedly, one of the most striking features in Brazilian organizations is the hierarchy, “which translates through a tendency toward centralization of power within social groups” (Freitas, 1997).

Education

Brazil is influenced by the centralized, state-funded and state-regulated school system developed in the first half of the nineteenth century in Europe. It is the State’s responsibility to offer free education as the foundation of democracy by ensuring what is considered necessary knowledge indispensable to all citizens. However, in the elementary and secondary schools, the large deficit of teacher training, underpaid professionals, and institutional corruption in different levels of the system resulted in serious problems

related to quality, equity, and inappropriate use of resources. Generally speaking, “good education” in Brazil, nowadays, means private education.

In consequence, those who cannot afford “good education,” start their lives with considerable disadvantage. In contrast to that, Post-secondary public schools are on top of the ranking. So those from the most impoverished social strata have considerable difficulties to get into high quality, affordable post-secondary schools, creating a causal loop of poverty and restrictions for social mobility.

Politics

In 2018, Jair Bolsonaro, a former military, and extreme conservative candidate won the elections endorsing violence as a means to bring changes to the country, amongst homophobic, racist and misogynist declarations.

“You will not change anything in this country through voting – nothing, absolutely nothing. Unfortunately, you’ll only change things by having a civil war and doing the work the military regime didn’t do. Killing 30,000. (...) If a few innocent people die, that’s all right.” –Jair Bolsonaro

To understand what drove people from different social strata to vote for a far-right candidate it is necessary to know that an authoritarian military regime ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985. During those two decades, the dictatorship suppressed freedom of speech and opposition, killing or disappearing some 475 people, and torturing thousands more (Serbin, 2019). So how could a candidate that supports such atrocities won the elections by 57,7 million votes in 2018?

When the military dictatorship ended, inflation and unemployment were chronic, and Brazil was the world’s biggest debtor, owing about US\$90 billion to international lenders (João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo, 2009). However, the past twenty-five years, after Plano Real – a set of measures to stabilize Brazilian economy – and the social programs created and invested by the successive democratic governments, the country went through economic growth and the population experienced social mobility.

From 2002 to 2016, Brazil had a left-wing party in power, electing two presidents for two mandates each. These governments efforts reduced poverty, widened university access to Black students, and strengthened rights for housemaids, but an economic crisis (that brought the population to lose purchasing power) and a series of corruption scandals damaged the government’s image. In 2016, president Dilma Rousseff was forced from office through an impeachment process.

The combination of those facts led Brazilians to lose their faith in democracy and most of the institutions (congress, supreme court, political parties, and the presidency). Meanwhile, the armed forces had eight out of ten Brazilians supporting them (Datafolha, 2018).

That shows us that our inability to deal with the differences and our dichotomic mindset (which will be explored further in the section “Zeitgeist”) is based on a scarcity mentality, that is if someone is winning, necessarily all the others are losing. Since the early days of colonization and slavery, the place we stand in society’s hierarchy is part of how we perceive ourselves. To lose privilege is to lose identity, being either the one that sees minorities occupying places that historically belonged to them (poor people air travelling, Black in universities, women in high positions in companies, to give a few examples) or the one that could try the middle-class lifestyle and lost it with the blink of an eye.

This belief in being either the oppressed or the oppressor was the spur for Retrotopia (Bauman, 2017) – to idealize the past. When we feel our identity threatened we inevitably choose security over freedom, even when that implies having nostalgic feelings for the most atrocious moments of Brazilian history.

Rio de Janeiro

In the same elections that led Bolsonaro to the presidency of the country, the candidate for Rio de Janeiro’s state government voiced that government agents would have permission granted to kill opponents if they felt threatened. Elected Rio de Janeiro State Governor, Wilson Witzel authorized the Military Police to shoot criminals’ “stupid little heads”, as he declared once, if they see that they are armed, ignoring the fact that favela residents had been killed in the past when carrying objects that were mistaken for guns, such as umbrellas and drills.

The use of more violent confrontation strategies and tactics concern particularly on those living in favelas and other marginalized communities due to the history of abuse of power that almost always occurs when the state-run Military Police occupies their neighbourhoods (Leon, 2019).

“In the model city of the big investors, the contradictions increase, and the population rises against the withdrawal of their rights. To the same extent, the public power gives up legality to maintain established order and aggravates institutional violence.” – Marielle Franco (2014, p.121)

Regarding Rio de Janeiro City, since the 2014 Brazil World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio, it is descending into a spiral of economic, political, and public security crisis. A series of scandals and corruption denunciations reached not only the state and municipal governments but also the monitoring organs. Public finance collapsed, the city hall was lacking money for the payrolls. Rio’s Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) failed as a public security policy that guarantees the rights of city residents (Silva, 2017), producing an outbreak of conflicts and intensifying armed violence.

In 2016 an evangelical pastor, Marcelo Crivella, was elected mayor of Rio de Janeiro. In 2018 he was accused of a lack of administrative integrity for offering unique benefits to Evangelical groups but dodged an impeachment process. In 2019, another attempt to start an impeachment process and, as this paper was written, the city's council voted for opening up a process.

During his mandate, he has been cutting funds for the New Black Institute, Rio's slave cemetery and one of few institutions charged with public education about Rio's past as the world's largest slave port. Considering that arts are a great way of expression of social causes, his Strategic Plan does not provide initiatives to foster cultural projects, especially those of Black culture and religions with African roots (Felizola, 2018). Public policies are also hampering the production of cultural events in favelas by increasing the number of licenses needed in order to host an event on the street.

*“Of one thing I’m sure: we will not have any culture in unruly areas.
(...) Areas revolted by violence, by murders, by unmanageability, by the
militias” –Aspásia Camargo, Rio’s Sub-Secretary of Planning*

Corruption is not only in the institutional sphere but it is part of the Brazilian culture, and it connects directly to the scarcity mentioned above mentality. Racism has always been present through people's attitudes and public policies, but it was intensified after the 2018 elections. The highest authorities of the country have exhorted anti-human rights declarations. These are just reflections of the crisis Brazil is going through at the moment, enhancing old challenges and bringing new ones to the table.

Favelas

History

The word favela as we know today was coined in the early twentieth century as the name of a neighbourhood on a hillside in Rio de Janeiro.

After Canudos war – that took place in Bahia, a northeastern state in Brazil – soldiers arrived in Rio with no money and no job and decided to set up a camp on a hill. Gradually, the camp expanded with more veterans and the recently released slaves. They named the community “Favela” due to a high concentration of the plant with the same name in the area. The settlement became so large and visible that its name turned into a reference to denominate all poor communities that spread through the city in the following decades.

With industrial growth, the city needed cheap labour, attracting people from other areas of the country. Favelas started to grow in promising and wealthy areas of the city – because at first it was convenient that the blue-collars

(housekeepers, doormen, plumbers, drivers, and so forth) lived near their jobs – until favelas became a threat to the real estate market depreciating the value of prosperous neighbourhoods (Meirelles & Athayde, 2014).

The strategy of the Government to address favelas in the early decades of the twentieth century was displacement and extinction, claiming that the precarious conditions of the territory were a matter of public health. That strategy prevailed during the military dictatorship. It was only in the 1990s that the Government started a program that focused on social services, real estate regulation, and infrastructure qualification (Meirelles & Athayde, 2014).

In the 1980s, with the exponential growth of the population and with the arrival of cocaine in Rio, plus the absence of the State, “drug gangs and militias took control of these territories and established parallel forms of social orders” (Magaloni, Melo, & Silva, 2017, p.6). Since then, favelas have become synonymous of a transgression of law and order.

Another relevant fact in the country’s history is decisive to the favela context. Brazil was the country that received the most massive flow of Africans enslaved between the 16th and 19th centuries. 4.86 million slaves were landed in the country between 1501 and 1900 (The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, n.d.). The estimates are that 38% to 44% of the absolute number of Africans forced to leave the continent came to Brazil (Schwarcz, 2018). Brazil was also the last country in the West to abolish slavery. At that time, the Government provided no assistance or guarantee in the transition to the free work system or to include this population in society with policies regarding education, health, housing, and all structural problems. That is one of the reasons why the majority of favela residents is Black. Also, in the same period, that slavery was abolished, policies to encourage immigration of Germans, Italians and Spaniards to Brazil were intense. The consequence of the European migration to Brazil was the “whitening” of Brazilian society.

The criminalization of poverty and Black people was evident in the nineteenth century with the Lei da Vadiagem (Vagrancy Law), a law to detain those who were “idle when being able to work, without the income to secure sufficient means of subsistence, or those providing their subsistence through illegal occupation. In a period when ex-slaves had no opportunities in society, most of the people arrested were Black. Also at the time, the practice of capoeira and samba, two cultural expressions with African roots, were criminalized. That mentality persists until nowadays. In 2017 the Senate analyzed a proposal that would criminalize funk carioca, a music genre derived from Miami bass created in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas in the 1980s. The proposal read: “It is a fact and knowledge of Brazilians, spread even by various media and internet communication media with rotten

content (sic) alerting the population to the public power of crime against the child, teenage minor and family. This ‘false culture’ called funk (Carioca) is a public health crime” (Machado, 2017).

Public strategies

The Government responded to the growth of the power of drug gangs and the pressure from society (frightened by the violence of the city) by declaring a “war on drugs” using to enter favelas not only the military police but also the Battalion of Special Operations (BOPE), a tactical team. The military police in Brazil are responsible for maintaining public order, meaning that officers that are trained for war are dealing with citizens.

The coat of arms of the Rio de Janeiro military police has a crown, two firearms in front of a sugar cane plant and a coffee plant. The plants are a representation of the Brazilian ruling class of the period, 1809 (Araujo, 2016) (Pimentel, 2016). At that time, the Portuguese monarchy arrived in Rio de Janeiro, turning it into the capital of the Empire, and “over half of Rio’s population was enslaved, the entire economy depended on them, and fear of rebellion was high” (Ashcroft, 2014, n.a.). The corporation was an armed force in the service of the monarchy and the private property owners. Since then, there has been no institutional reform. During the military dictatorship, ostensible policing and the use of torture justified the death of suspects in the name of public safety. Even the police officers agree that the corporation needs to change. Over 77% of the officers believe that the police should be demilitarized (Lima, Bueno & Santos, 2014).

Linking Brazilian history with the context of the world today, in a consumer-based society that has members “disqualified for consumption,” those with no purchasing power are society’s outcasts.

“(...) To not buy is the unpleasant and pustular stigma of life without achievements – to be a non-entity and to serve no purpose. It means not only a lack of pleasure but a lack of human dignity. Lack of meaning in life.” (Bauman, 2013, p.83).

The reason why this subsection is approaching Rio’s military police history and the interpretation of marginalization in the post-modern world is that correlating those two facts give us an idea of the criminalization of the poor and the Black. The creation of a police force was and still is strengthening existing social hierarchies.

Police has a history of a culture of violence in Rio supported by the Government through incentives such as the “bravery bonus” – in the salary of officers for engaging in lethal shootouts with suspects (Cano, 1997) that

was effective until 1998 – or by declarations like “The police will aim in the head and ... fire! To have no mistake” from the Governor. Currently, there are means to legitimize the killing of people in favelas, and almost any killings are investigated by criminal justice. This flexibility is a boost to the culture of violence that along with institutional racism leads the police to target criminals as well as innocent residents (Magaloni, Melo, & Silva, 2017).

“When Witzel (Governor of Rio) says that the police has permission to kill in the favela, he is committing a crime against humanity, since we do not even have a centrality of judgment in Rio de Janeiro where we confuse umbrella with rifle” – Renata Souza, Member of the Lower House in Rio de Janeiro

UPP

In 2008, in an attempt to take over the lawless territories, the Government implemented a new project inspired by the security program adopted in Medellín, Colombia, the Pacifying Police Units (UPP). The plan was to establish 24-hour police inside favelas to shift from the police paradigm of only entering favelas to perform search-and-removal operations for drugs and traffickers (Pacifying Police Units (UPP), n.d.). According to the Government’s website, UPP’s concept goes beyond the community police and has its strategy based on the partnership between the population and the Public Security institutions allowing public services, infrastructure, private investments and social, sports and cultural projects in favelas (UPP, n.d.).

More than 9,000 police officers were assigned to the UPPs, with around 11 cops per 1,000 inhabitants. In total, there are 763 favelas in Rio de Janeiro, more than 140 received a UPP (Magaloni, Melo, & Silva, 2017). The priority was favelas near tourist destinations, as Brazil had won the bid to hold the 2014 Soccer World Cup and the 2016 Olympic games. Also, communities controlled by Comando Vermelho – a belligerent drug gang that refused to negotiate with the corrupted police, and at the time was burning buses and attacking the Military Police buildings – were a priority. Favelas controlled by paramilitary groups, known as militias, were also on the priority list to pacification as the groups took advantage of the support of their commanders to get rid of retail drug traffickers (Magaloni, Franco & Melo, 2017).

At first, the population had hope that the UPPs would work, bringing peace to the residents, as some of them shared with the investigator during the field research. However, the project failed due to two factors. One, favela residents were never consulted when formulating and implementing the project; two, the project based only on the police going to the favela territories, without a structural transformation of the institution, no

transformation of public safety practices and policies, nor a change of the State's relationship with the favela population. Only the police were present inside favelas, the other secretariats, such as education, and work and employment were not part of the project. Without community base strategies the result is a much bitter war inside favelas with police and drug gangs confrontations.

The program started to show some real flaws in 2014, when Amarildo de Souza, a construction worker resident of Rocinha, was taken, tortured inside a UPP, killed, and had his corpse concealed.

In the face of falling policy results and popularity, federal officials had decided to empty the UPPs when they took over state security (as explained in the next subsection), closing five Units (Barbon, 2018).

Military Intervention

In 2018 military tanks and heavily armed soldiers took the streets of Rio for 320 days, when president Michel Temer implemented a military intervention in the State, justified by the supposed crackdown on violence (Martins & Santos, 2018).

The use of exceptional legal instruments such as Operations for the Guarantee of Law and Order (GLO), according to a study by the Observatório da Intervenção (Ramos, 2019), the investment of 1.2 billions of Brazilian Reals did not produce significant changes in Rio's public security. As some numbers show: The Fogo Cruzado Data Laboratory recorded a total of 8,613 firearm shootings and firefights during the intervention, an increase of 56.6% over the same period in 2017. There were 54 registered killings in the period, with a total of 216 people killed, a figure 63.6% higher than the same period of 2017. Stray bullets were also more frequent, victimizing a total of 189 people, of whom 36 died.

The numbers above show that the approach to the problems of violence and crime was based on a mindset of war, using combat troops, favelas occupations, and large operations as an intensification of what was already being done.

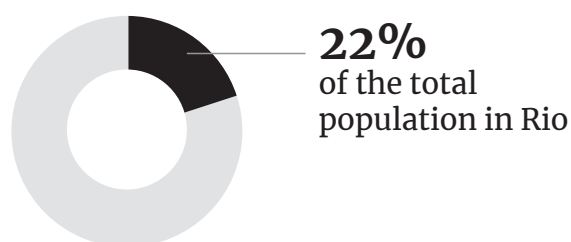
“The federal intervention in the security of Rio de Janeiro was an invention that has already begun archaic — sold as new old “solutions.” An expensive and innocuous attempt to change a complex context, using old tactics, rather than the innovative structural and political reforms that would be needed. It is a model that should not be repeated in other crises in Brazil.” – Intervenção federal: um modelo para não copiar. Rio de Janeiro: Observatório da Intervenção, CESeC, 2019.

Statistics

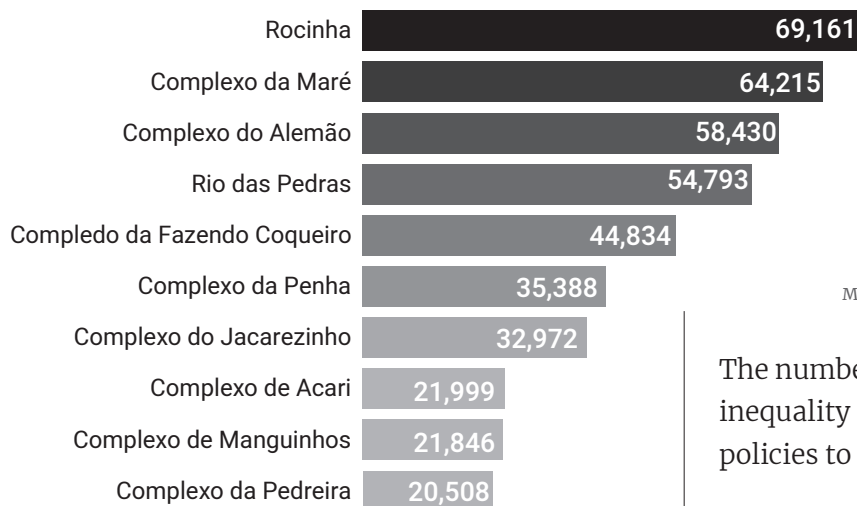
Unfortunately there are not many surveys about favelas, another indication of their marginalization, but according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in a 2010 survey Rio had the largest favela population of the country. Some other statistic numbers found are presented below:

1.434.975 residents

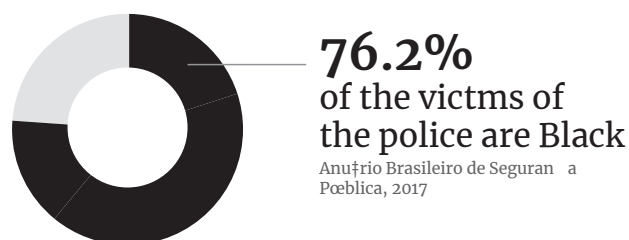
1.018 favelas



The numbers below show how expressive the population in favelas is to Rio. Some numbers show the prejudice against favelas and favelados:

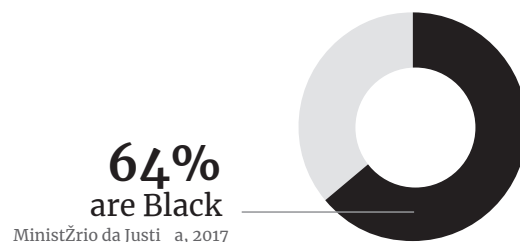


One of the main facets of social inequality in Brazil is the concentration of homicides in the Black population



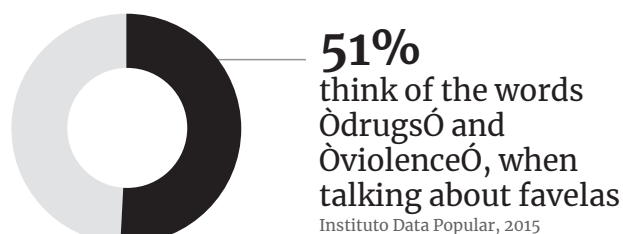
Brazil is third in prison population rank with

727,000
prisoners



The numbers above also illustrates the inequality and indicates that the current public policies to contain violence are not working.

Some numbers show the prejudice against favelas and favelados:



System Diagram

All the content presented in this section is a collective construction stemmed from the perceptions of favela residents from Rio, each practicing their own form of activism. This understanding could only be achieved with the knowledge shared by the participants of the workshop, which process is detailed in the section “Workshop.” The diagram provides an understanding of the system of the marginalization of favelas and the complex relationships between its main actors. The takeaways from understanding the system could not all be placed on the diagram, so for legibility, the main insights will be presented below.

The descriptions of each group and each relationship in the system are generalizations. It is intended to be a macro view to highlight the most problematic scenario that favela residents are currently facing.

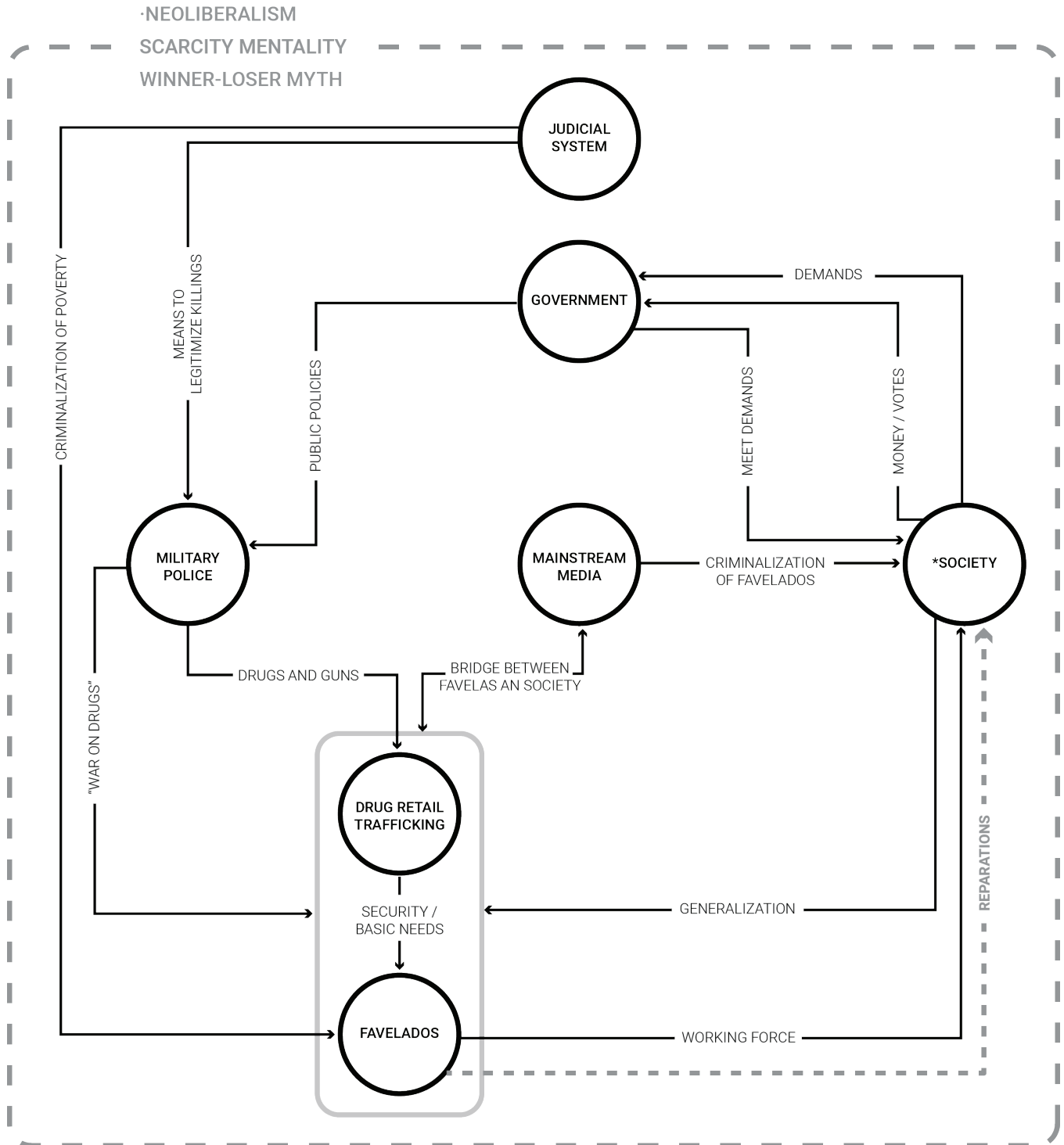


Figure 03. System Diagram

Boundaries

(neoliberalism + scarcity mentality + winner-loser myth)

This is a system in which its relations are contained in larger systems. On this extent, the definition of the boundaries can provide a better understanding of how this very system works.

“Rules change behaviour. Power over rules is real power. (...) If you want to understand the deepest malfunctions of systems, pay attention to the rules, and to who has power over them” (Meadows, 1997, p. 8).

All we have to do is to open the newspapers to conclude that this is an environment led by neoliberal practices. For instance, that the Government argues that the indigenous populations are on the way to the country’s progress because they occupy lands with mineral resources (Dolzan, 2016), or the exchange of the pension system to a capitalization model. (Resende & Caram, 2019).

Going further, the logic that the world needs to be divided between winners and losers underlies a relationship of oppression in this system. The “war on drugs” and the means the judicial system create to legitimize the killing of favelados – being them criminals or not – are a few examples of that.

The rules are not necessarily in the books, but they express the decisions made. In this case, acting to protect corporations, a society of privilege, and the Government itself. These rules created by a few force all the other actors in the system to fall into this loop reinforcing competition and scarcity mentality.

***Society**

The term “society” is used on the diagram to define groups of people that have racial, emotional, psychological, social, and economic advantages over favela residents, including groups of individuals and organizational powers of political influence.

Working Force

(favelados)

One of the main reasons why favelas grew exponentially in Rio is related to the growth of the working force of society. Favelas provide the workforce of society.

Drugs and Guns Supply

(society + military police)

Drug traffic in favelas is a retail business. Drugs and weapons are planted and fabricated in other countries, and gangs have access to such products mainly through corrupt police officers and members of society that act as the real merchants.

The Government

(Government + society + favelas)

The system works as potent maintenance of oppression. Society endorses the power of the Government (municipal, state, and national) through the vote. A cultural characteristic of short-term thinking and Government's main interest in power results in the use of the "war on drugs" as a way to show society they are addressing the demand for security, while at the same time they exercise mass control.

Public Policies

(Government + favelas + retail drug trafficking)

The State makes itself present in favelas through military power. There is a lack of public policies to address favelas structural and social problems. Meanwhile, in some favelas, the drug gang leaders play the role of providers of basic needs to the community.

The War on Drugs

(Government + military police + favelados + retail drug trafficking)

The Government declared a "war on drugs," but instead of discussing drug policies or addressing the problem of drugs and guns that enter the country in bulks through its borders, this war takes place in favelas, where the retail market is. Consequently, this was transformed into a war on the poor, as a eugenic approach on Rio's problems, causing the death of innocent people, endorsing the systemic racism, and depriving them of their human rights.

Maintenance of Privilege

(society)

One of the primary elements of this narrative is the racial and socioeconomic inequality or the fact that the most substantial part of the population is black and poor and the smallest percent of the population in white and extremely wealthy.

Society's fear of losing their privilege is based on its history of colonialism, slavery and scarcity mentality. When someone from a lower social class achieves goals considered as privileged achievements, that generates a feeling of threat in society and the automatic response is to reject any inequality reparation. That premise leads to a devaluation of favelados' lives, to the point that one feels entitled to judge who is worthy of human rights and who is not.

Social status is part of society's identity, and in order to preserve this identity, this group makes choices that in the long-term produce the opposite of what they in fact desired. When the Government reinforces the belief that favelas cause all the violence in Rio, and for that, it is necessary to use violence to repress it, it is convenient for society to reiterate that narrative, projecting their fear in favelas and favelados, as scapegoats to their frustration. In this perspective, they have to have privilege enough to afford wealthy gated communities and private security.

The Military Police

The military police are trained for war, and their primary function is to establish order. When they are sent to repress the retail drug trafficking in favelas, the approach is through indiscriminate violence. Add to that the institutional racism and death in favelas become something trivial since the Black and the poor are perceived of less value to society.

BOPE, the Battalion of Special Operations of the military police, is trained as a war machine. During their preparation, they would sing songs like: "Interrogation is very easy to do, get a favelado and beat them until it hurts. Interrogation is very easy to end, get a favelado and beat until you kill them" or "Man in black, what is your mission? Is to invade favelas and leave bodies on the ground".

Caveirão

(military police + favelados)

BOPE makes their incursion into favelas in an armoured car called caveirão, that means big skull. The police describe the cars as "a machine to kill criminals and invade favelas." The black vehicle has holes for the barrels of rifles, and its exterior carries the symbol of a knife into a skull and two guns behind it. In the 1990s while caveirão was entering a favela, the residents could hear from its speaker messages of death threats like "I came here to kill you."

While going up the hills of favelas, caveirão runs through narrow roads dragging with it whatever is blocking their way. Resident cars parked on the side of those roads are commonly destroyed and with them, also entire families incomes, as the cars are commonly used for work, for example, selling hot dogs. The State never compensates for any damages to the population in favelas.

Cultural Oppression

(military police + favelados)

While exercising their practice, the military police oppress the cultural expressions in favelas, like prohibiting funk parties, criminalizing favela's

primary expression of its culture. Besides ending with the leading entertainment of favelados, it generates negative impacts in the local economy. Small businesses lose money when residents stop going to the local hairdressers and stop consuming the beer that would be sold in and around those parties.

Criminalization of favelados

(favelados + media + judicial system)

Mainstream media has an essential role in building favelas' narratives. Most often, when favelas are on the news, the topic is violence. Not only that, but how it is communicated is both a reflection of and an influence on how favelas are perceived by society. There is a story that has been told that persists in generalizing favela residents as being either criminals or accomplices of the retail drug trafficking.

Anti-drug policies have been created since slavery has been abolished. It was designed as a form of repression of the Black population. Alongside with anti-drug laws, the prohibition of capoeira and samba were also ways to contribute to the criminalization of this population. In 2015 a new law left to the judge to interpret whether the amount of drug the defendant carries is for their consumption or trafficking. Once again, in a society of systemic racism, the ones that pay the highest prices are the Black and the poor population. It is shown by the disproportional number of Black people incarcerated in Brazil.

The law is on the police side. Currently, there are legal means to justify assassinations indiscriminately in favelas. Police justify civilians' deaths (including the killing of innocent people) alleging resistance to arrest. The occurrence is recorded as self-defence, and the witnesses are the same police officers who participated in the action. The crime is rarely investigated. The new Justice Minister is proposing changes in the law to protect police who use deadly force.

Consequences of the Police Incursions in Favelas

(military police + retail drug trafficking + favelados)

When police make incursions inside favelas chasing drug traffickers, the entire community suffers the consequences. Schools, health clinics, public transport, and business shut down; residents are suppressed from the right to come and go, and people are exposed to stray bullets. During those incursions, the population needs to protect themselves from heavily armed police and drug gangs.

Consequences of the Marginalization of Favelas

(government + mainstream media + military police + judicial system + society + retail drug trafficking + favelados)

The direct and indirect impacts of the marginalization of favelas have many consequences that affect the entire country. However, this part of the paper points out what directly impacts the everyday lives of favelados.

Favelas are built organically and informally. The lack of a postal code can have many consequences for its population. It decreases the chances of being hired, it prevents them from getting loans to invest in their businesses, and it also limits people from having purchases delivered at their homes, to cite a few examples.

The lack of basic sanitation leaves the population more susceptible to diseases. Consequently, the lack of investment in public health care in those territories leads to huge gaps between life span rates from favelas and other neighbourhoods of the city.

Transportation connects people to opportunities and resources, and that was one of the primary reasons why favelas grew in downtown Rio. Today, with favelas spread throughout the city, transportation is another instrument of marginalization. Apart from being expensive, people that live far from the downtown and South areas of the city do not have proper access to transportation options, spending extended time commuting, that also affects their health and wellbeing.

The low quality of public schools also impacts on democracy. Lack of training to develop critical minds, and lack of access to information lead to less participative citizens. How can a society be democratic if people do not have access to the information?

“Democratic political systems (...) make claims to legitimacy partly on the basis of their citizens’ ability to seek and obtain reliable, credible information about issues that affect them, information that allows them to interact with other citizens and with their governing institutions (...) no social arrangements, indeed, no culture or society, can exist without information (...) a primary requirement for a “good society” is equitable information access and use.” (Lievrouw and Farb, 2003, p. 504-505)

Not only people need access to information to be able to advocate for their interests, but it is foundational to equality in the sense that it is central to the action. When the mainstream media combined with public policies and the police actions reinforce a narrative of exclusion with violence, as it is the case, it is difficult to understand the real impacts of our own decisions and what narratives we are repeating and reinforcing.

The definition of one specific enemy of society and this having the label of “war on drugs” desensitize society’s conception of favelas. In such a case, the most significant consequence is the dehumanization of favelados. Moreover, when one is not human, they are removed from all rights, including the right to live.

In a polarized world, if asked who is winning, the marginalized will say “the privileged society,” the society will say “the criminals and the corrupt.”

No one is winning.

A World Divided

This section makes an interpretative analysis of what underlies our beliefs. In the current stage of this research, the outcomes help to understand what is driving our behaviours that perpetuate the system of marginalization of favelas. In addition, the issues uncovered here will lead to what shifts are necessary for profound changes towards a desired future.

Our Current State of Crisis & Collapse

A mapping of what is undesired about the present began through the co-creation of the workshop From Debate to Dialogue, applied in the Design with Dialogue series. (Meninato, Lima, & Whyte, 2018). Tieni Meninato, Jenny Whyte, and I shared our visions of what is undesired and used the divides defined by Otto Scharmer, Katrin Kaufer and Peter Senge at the MIT ULab to frame them. In the book Leading From The Emerging Future, they explore three main divides:

The ecological divide has become very familiar in the past years, is a central focus of scientific research, worldwide conferences and political debate. It mainly involves our overuse of natural resources and the impacts that we as

a society have caused in our ecosystem. “Although we have only one planet earth, we leave an ecological footprint of 1.5 planets; that is, we are currently using 50 percent more resources than our planet can regenerate to meet our current consumption needs.” (2014, pg. 04)

The social divide, also a well-known and growing societal issue that revolves around inequality and its consequences, such as lack of financial distribution, political representation, and increased polarization (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2014). Oxfam released a study in 2017 that indicated that the world’s poorest 50% owned the same in assets as the \$426bn owned by eight men, including Bill Gates, owner of Microsoft, and Amancio Ortega, founder of fast fashion chain Zara.

The spiritual-cultural divide, defined as the disconnect between self and self, and self and other, relates to one’s self-awareness and purpose. Scharmer explores why this divide exists through the optic of our lack of listening skills, and empathy. Our understanding of ourselves is enriched when we are open to understanding others, how they see us, and the world, and how that creates our reflections about ourselves. It is in a sense what is commonly referred to as self-awareness, but with the added layer, of awareness of others, and your surroundings (Meninato, 2018).

Our previous collaboration focused on the spiritual-cultural divide and a particular way to bridge it, by moving from debate to dialogue. Our workshop led to the realization that promoting the idea of dialogue as a path to a desired future is excluding; it keeps important actors from the conversation and directly contradicts our belief that everyone matters. That discomfort was a powerful drive to stay with the trouble, and our investigations are in a way a step back from that experience, to revisit core-issues that cause these disconnects, to once again propose a way forward.

Exploring the crisis state further through a Collaborative Method

In our previous collaborations we observed that our personal experiences and personalities shape our unique designs; Tieni has a rare capability to feel and make sense of what emerges from interconnectedness by observing and connecting to individuals, while I, Jananda, sense, and am fueled by the masses, movements, and behaviours that arise from the physical encounter of people.

These inclinations shape our Master Research Projects. Our projects converge in the search for core issues through a systemic, ontological and subjective lens, and diverge when I comprehend more of the Social Divide, while Tieni’s exploration moves back to the Spiritual-Cultural Divide.

We found that this overlap and distinction was an excellent setting for collaboration, where we could both see the impacts of our exploration in the social/cultural – individual and vice versa.

Considering we both left off at a point of discomfort, and found a need to revisit the divides through expanded lenses, acquired through our most recent experiences, we also selected a method of investigation that would fulfill our need to look at core issues and alternative views to handle the challenges.

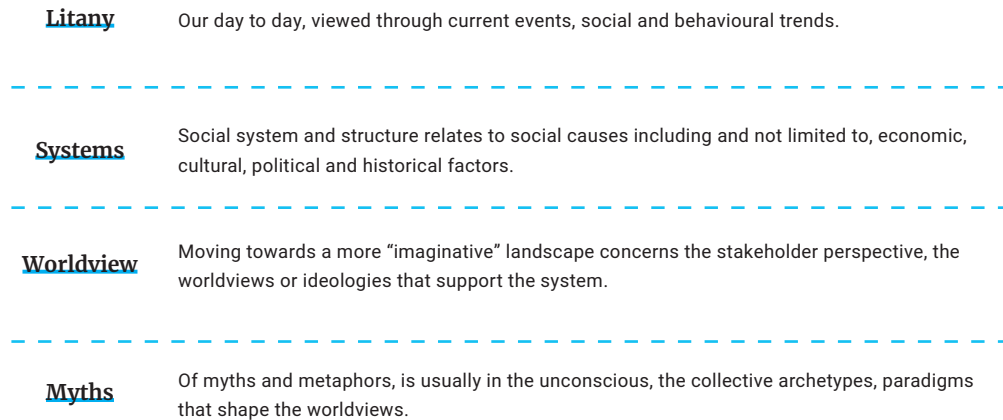


Figure 04. The Causal Layered Analysis Framework

Our Chosen method: The Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

Causal Layered Analysis is a framework and practice for organizational, social and civilizational change. It is a futures research method designed not necessarily to predict but to create space for transformation. The tool uses four levels of analysis of reality and is often seen linked to the image of an iceberg. The first layer, closer to the “real world” is the Litany; our day to day, viewed through current events, social and behavioural trends. The second, social system and structure relates to social causes including and not limited to, economic, cultural, political and historical factors. The third, moving towards a more “imaginative” landscape concerns the stakeholder perspective, the worldviews or ideologies that support the system. The last, of myths and metaphors, is usually in the unconscious, the collective archetypes, paradigms that shape the worldviews (Inayatullah, 1998). We would only like to note that the term “imaginative” should be used with caution, it does not suggest that it is not real, but merely that it inhabits a space that is most likely unconscious, hence needing to be surfaced in order to be understood and changed.

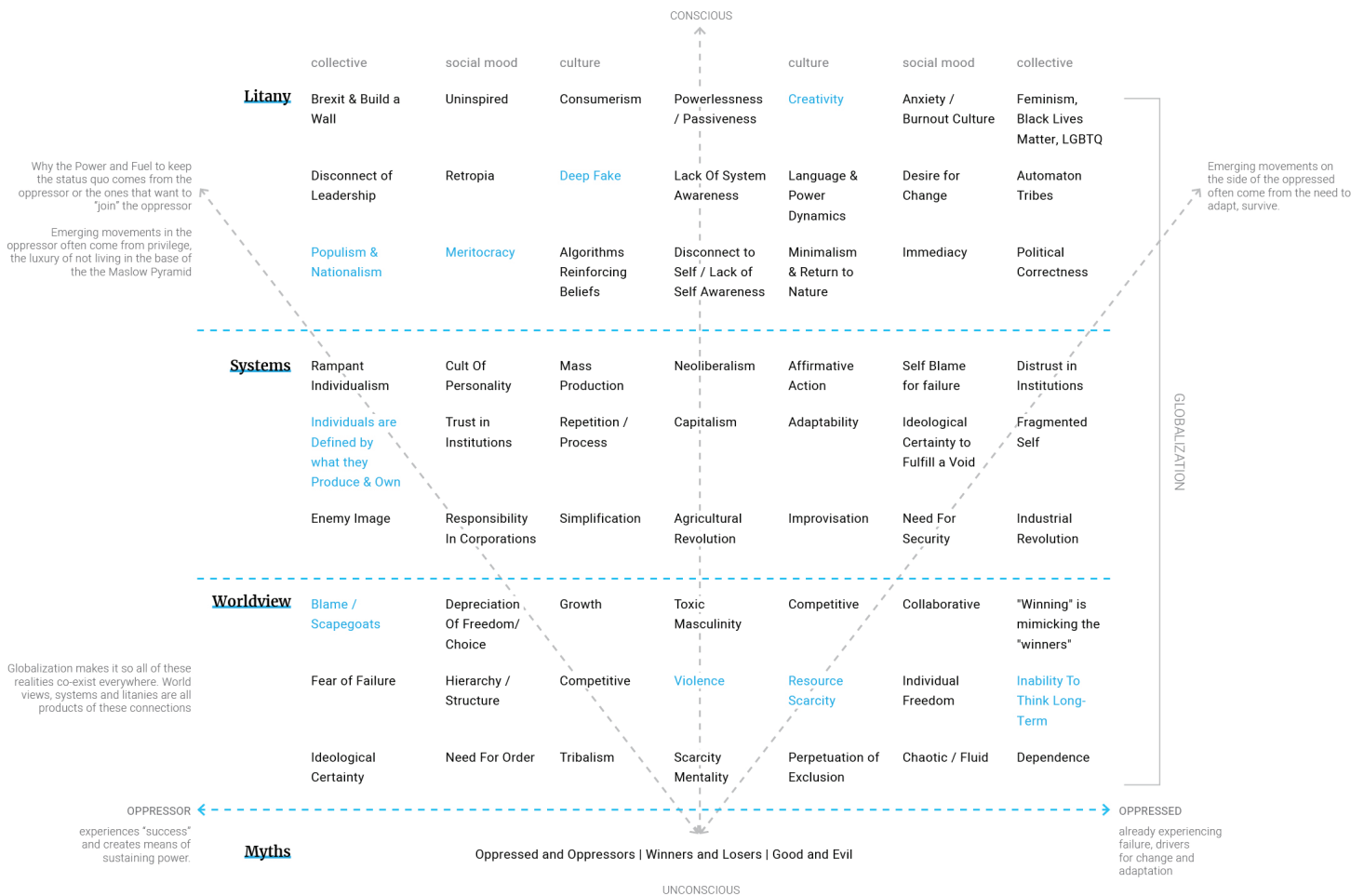
Why is the Causal Layered Analysis Suited for our Challenge

“It is a theory and methodology created in order to have deeper and longer lasting change” — (Causal Layered Analysis, 2013)

There are a few different aspects of the CLA that make it particularly interesting for our projects. We are both interested in using methods that will guide our thinking away from symptoms focused problem-solving. That is precisely the underlying ambition of this framework. Inayatullah tackles this challenge by including the often unrecognized realms of the imaginary as a fundamental part of the puzzle. It is precisely by bringing the unconsciousness to consciousness that we might be able to change core narratives and promote individual and cultural shifts.

Considering the complex or wicked problems that we are both investigating, the idea that our current crisis demands nothing less than a reinvention of the human — making it necessary to take a closer look at our nature, what drives and shapes our behaviour — becomes pertinent. Our use of CLA is a first attempt to investigate, understand, and recognize how these unconscious narratives shape our realities in order to establish a foundation for core issue-oriented problem-solving. In the following section, we will detail our unique way of using the CLA framework, the main insights for our projects, and highlight important themes that led us to those insights.

The Causal Layered Analysis



*philosophical and analytical inputs

*observational inputs (insights acquired through observation and workshop with favelados)

Figure 05. The Collaborative CLA¹

¹ A high definition of this figure is available in OCAD University Open Research Repository

Our Approach to CLA

The figure above portrays the results of our collaborative CLA, we will detail our unique approach and their results in the following sections.

If our objective is to highlight the desperate need for awareness of our systems, to eventually shape a desired future by tackling core issues, it is important to bring light to the complex related issues that create our realities. The process of mapping this CLA allowed us to dialogue about the issues that seemed most relevant to our challenges and see the intricate connections surfaced.

“Causal layered analysis can be seen as an effort to use poststructuralism, not just as an epistemological framework—as developed by thinkers such as Michel Foucault—but as a research method, as a way to conduct inquiry into the nature of past, present and future.” (Inayatullah, 1998, p.816).

Our way of considering the CLA layers was not linear. Both of us had collected insights from Desk research and trend analysis², literature review³, and fieldwork in favelas. This extensive research and knowledge share gave us not only an observational but philosophical/sociological base to interpret the CLA. These are some of the insights acquired through workshops with favelados and supported our themes:

- Favela dwellers, living in a scarcity culture, use creative ways to solve their problems (resource scarcity/creativity)
- Populism and fake news phenomenons marked the last elections in Brazil and other parts of the world
- Individuals tend to define themselves and others by what they produce; symbolized by what they can own or consume. Consequently, those with less buying power become marginalized and often see themselves as failures.
- Meritocracy is welcomed even in societies with profound, social and economic inequality. This worldview deepens the feelings of inadequacy of those marginalized.
- We share an inability to think or act considering long term scenarios. The lack of basic needs and struggle to survive seems to be one of the roots to this constraint for the marginalized.
- Violence⁴ is the status quo.
- Favela residents (poor and/or black) become the scapegoats⁵ of society.
- Favelados also embody oppressive behaviours as a means of belonging. (The way to “win” in our system is to mimic the “winner”⁶)
- The need for belonging, the familiarity with violence, and general lack of awareness of our systems underlie verbalizations of why the marginalized voted for a far-right candidate.

Our top insights were shared in a massive virtual board, then clustered by affinity. Some clusters were organized by the fact that they were current events, therefore, were organized in the litany layer. Other clusters showed a behavioural pattern, by naming them we identified that behind them were

² Fjord Trends, 2019; “How to Avoid the Empathy Trap,” n.d.; TrendHunter Trend Report, 2019; “Watch,” 2016; Brown, 2010; Collins, 2015; Crowley, 2018; Donald, 2012; Haden, 2015; Hall, 2019; Safian-Demers, 2019; Steinhage, Cable, & Wardley, 2017; TEDx Talks, 2012)

³ In complementary disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, economy, archeology, anthropology, and cognitive biology. (Arendt, 2006; Bauman, 1992, 2013, 2017; Foucault & Sheridan, Freire, 2000; 2012; Geli, 2018; Jung & Shamdasani, 2012; Kociatkiewicz & Kostera, 2018; Romesín, Verden-Zöllner, & Bunnell, 2012; Santos, 2018)

⁴ It is important to note that in this investigation we reflected on two modes of violence: Unsophisticated, relating to physical violence, or use of strong, crass language. Sophisticated Violence, relating to behaviors that reinforce patterns of pain and suffering through socially accepted, language and actions. This nuance is vital when observing how oppression is perpetuated in marginalized or integrated groups, when the objective is not to categorize groups of winners-losers, or in the right or the wrong, but as we are all part of this cycle.

⁵ Finding fault only in unsophisticated violence is one of the ways we support the scapegoat mentality. The “integrated”, in power positions, maintain ideas of what is socially accepted, according to their behaviors. This conserves a state of divide and oppression. This same mentality can be observed when speaking about the marginalized in general. Groups of less privileged people such as refugees, immigrants, etc, are often seen as scapegoats for larger societal issues.

⁶ The themes of unsophisticated violence and scapegoat mentality becomes crucial when attempting to escape this cycle. We all need to understand how we play a role in our current undesired systems in order to transition away from it. This theme will be further explored in the section of competitive, polarized reality and winner-loser myth.

either political system (placed in the systems layer) or an ideology (placed in the worldview layer). Through that process, deeper beliefs emerged and were placed in the myth layer.

In the second round of clustering exercise, we observed patterns between each layer. Could we find systems and worldviews that were more closely related to the trend that personifies them? We loosely re-structured the CLA according to that idea, considering that attempting to make those connections too precise would limit the understanding that all themes in all layers are interrelated, reinforcing, or causing an opposite movement. Having that said, we did notice an emerging pattern where the x-axis became a spectrum of evidence of structures of power (left), to liberation (right). Jananda complemented the range of the spectrum through interpolation on the oppositional dialectic scale, analyzing the correspondence with the basic sets, primarily on the surface level (litany). The range goes from collective: as global topics, to social mood: as sentiments, moving to culture: as factual manifestations. The scale proved of importance as a way to understand the mobility of the oppressed onto the oppressor (x-axis) and to analyze how to break this binary interpretation.

Nevertheless, in a reality that tends to io that tries to break free from this binary, categorizing view of the world. The insight to us is that these movements are all part of reality, they create each other, and we all manifest aspects of all of them. Our interest is to bring awareness to them so them we might make more conscious decisions to transition into a present/future that creates more love, joy, and integration for all, sustainably.

“Causal layered analysis asks us to go beyond conventional framings of issues. For instance, normal academic analysis tends to stay in the second layer with occasional forays into the third, seldom privileging the fourth layer (myth and metaphor) (...) These are the deep stories, the collective archetypes, the unconscious dimensions of the problem or the paradox.”
(Inayatullah, 1998, p.821)

This search for core issues led us to tackle the metaphor or myth layer differently than the rest. It was not in our interest to find multiple myths, but one so overpowering, that is shared and prevalent in western culture⁷. So once again we clustered the myths that surfaced in the process, finding a common theme.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines myth as “a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.”

⁷ Part of our research included eastern philosophy, in search of cultures that operate from different myths. Due to issues in translation, and how we felt our access through said philosophy were still through a “western lens” we opted not to include any insights on this process. Having that said, it is an interesting topic to explore in further research.

What we found was the winner-loser myth, the logic that the world needs to be divided between winners and losers. This is the story that underlies so many stories with the basic structure of the Hero Journey coined by Joseph Campbell: One goes out in the world to evolve, by finding mentors, that will guide them through a set of challenges, that will then lead to transformation. In our culture, led by the myth of winner and losers, shaped this structure to highlight that, the “hero” is the winner, therefore, several of the problems and challenges he encounters are in the shape of enemies, people who pertain to a different group that needs to be conquered, or even killed. (Campbell, Moyers, & Flowers, 1991) This way of thinking can be observed in the way that we try to overcome our own challenges, having to find our inner enemies⁷, to popular culture, through the Star Wars Saga. All permeated by the need to find and destroy evil. By keeping the exploration of the myth open, simply by saying, the winner-loser myth, we are not creating specific frames or associations usually brought by the use of metaphors. That is the story, a world that exists only through the interactions of winners and losers.

The CLA process also includes moving up the CLA, or, what other myth would cause a transition in the subsequent layers. In a way, this kind of thinking reinforces a dichotomy. We tend to think the opposite, or, a metaphor where we all win. We did not wish to pursue this path; our purpose was to find an origin and allow for other possibilities to emerge, each researcher moving forward with her search for a desired future.

Zeitgeist

Understanding the Spirit of the Times

Main Insights

A Competitive, Polarized, Reality

In all layers of the Causal Layered Analysis, we observed a pattern of dichotomies. Considering a vision of a desired future through and for ethical relationality, the issue with dichotomies is not the existence of opposites, or contradictions, the problem is when these groups compete.

Through dialogue with one our peers, Angie Fleming, who is also interested in societal transition, it was brought to our attention that the term compete, originated from the Latin competere “strive in common, strive after something in company with or together.” in classical Latin “to meet or come together, agree or coincide; to be qualified”. In that definition, competition is in no way, a barrier for the vision of a desired future established in this paper. It is the evolution of the word that conflicts with a future where multiple realities can coexist, and where interdependence is something to be celebrated, not avoided. The Middle French compéter is where we see the connotation of “to enter or be put in rivalry with” (“compete | Origin and meaning of compete by Online Etymology Dictionary,” 2001). Rivalry, as

defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary, is defined as “one of two or more striving to reach or obtain something that only one can possess.” Possession, is, as defined by the same source, as “the act of having or taking into control — control or occupancy of property without regard to ownership.” It is when the concept of competition evokes a scarcity mentality, where only one group can have access to a particular something, and consequently the idea of enemy groups, where one can demonstrate they are more deserving of certain somethings that our idea of a Pluriverse is at risk.

It is precisely that use of the word competition that we found evidence of in all layers of the Causal Layered Analysis. It showed us that this way of thinking, of seeing others as either allies or enemies permeates our ways of being, from political ideologies to relationships. We are often competing from the best grade, for the best job, for the best place to live, to eventually win at the definitions of success established by our current system.

As a researcher that is constantly trying to break the pattern of dichotomous thinking, and reflecting that my tendency to shun that definition of competition, might be just that, I will leave a question I have not been able to answer in this process.

How might we transition to a future of ethical relationality, where all lives matter, and “winners” do not use their power to enslave and oppress, through and with these ways of being that trust the outcomes of rivalrous competition?

Is Our Origin Story Nothing but Myth?

“The researches, in which we may engage on this occasion, are not to be taken for historical truths, but merely as hypothetical and conditional reasonings, fitter to illustrate the nature of things, than to show their true origin. — Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality Among Mankind

We found that underlying this worldview of rivalrous competition is a myth of winners and losers. We share a belief that modernity as we know it can only be achieved through systemic dominance, violence, and inequality. We observed the symptoms of this belief in the litany layer of the CLA, through movements like Brexit and “build a wall” and the ideologies that support that logic for problem-solving. In the systems layer through the ideologies of neoliberalism, and enemy images. In the Worldview layer, through patterns of Tribalism, Scarcity Mentality, and the search for scapegoats.

As the purpose of the Causal Layered Analysis is to find core issues, I sought out to find and understand our origin story. Through the eyes of archeologists and anthropologists, how did modernity come to be? In this search, I found a group of experts in the area, questioning the most commonly told origin myth, as told by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the book cited above.

Before moving forward with this topic, which lies outside of our area of expertise, we would like to emphasize why this is significant for this paper. The objective of sharing this story is not to put in question what is the “true story of the origins of mankind as we know it.” David Graeber and David Wengrow have published work, and evidence from their scientific community to support their findings, however, for this paper, the interest is only in entertaining a possibility. His proposition was “merely as hypothetical and conditional reasonings, fitter to illustrate the nature of things than to show their true origin” as cited above. This is a clear expression of how trapped we are by long told narratives. In the context of this paper, the historical truth is not important, but how our ways of thinking, our myths, constrain or amplify our envisioning possibilities for the future.

The Origin Myth of Inevitable Inequality

For centuries, we have been telling ourselves a simple story about the origins of social inequality. For most of their history, humans lived in tiny egalitarian bands of hunter-gatherers. Then came farming, which brought with it private property, and then the rise of cities which meant the emergence of civilization properly speaking. Civilization meant many bad things (wars, taxes, bureaucracy, patriarchy, slavery...) but also made possible written literature, science, philosophy, and most other great human achievements.

Almost everyone knows this story in its broadest outlines. Since at least the days of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it has framed what we think the overall shape and direction of human history to be. This is important because the narrative also defines our sense of political possibility. Most see civilization, hence inequality, as a tragic necessity. Some dream of returning to a past utopia, of finding an industrial equivalent to ‘primitive communism’, or even, in extreme cases, of destroying everything, and going back to being foragers again. But no one challenges the basic structure of the story.

There is a fundamental problem with this narrative.

It isn’t true (Graeber & Wengrow, 2018).

This idea is interesting to our project in two layers. One, simply, the importance of remembering that so many of our ideological certainties, constructs that shape our daily choices and behaviours, might be based on nothing but a myth. The second is the idea that social inequality is not necessarily an inevitable aspect of reality.

“Mainstream social science now seems mobilized to reinforce this sense of hopelessness. Almost on a monthly basis we are confronted with publications trying to project the current obsession with property distribution back into the Stone Age, setting us on a false quest for ‘egalitarian societies’ defined in such a way that they could not possibly exist outside some tiny band of foragers (and possibly, not even then)” (Graeber & Wengrow, 2018). This myth, when investigated in more depth through the CLA process, reinforces subsequent myths, linked to the ideas of rivalrous competition, such as:

- Humans are innately selfish, competitive and aggressive.
- We need to fight our own nature and those who succumb to it (enemies) in order to maintain modernity.
- Using wealth for power and dominance is an inevitable side of inequality.
- Some beings have minor importance and their existence has lesser intrinsic worth.

Referring back to the metaphor of “thinking outside the box,” if we are to create a transition to the desired future of ethical relationality, this might be the box we need surpass. How might a new narrative expand our visions for the future? Does it matter if this narrative is based on historical truth or not? Does the fact that versions of said future have never existed mean that we are then unable to create and live it?

What if we were to consider this narrative as truth: “Overwhelming evidence from archaeology, anthropology, and kindred disciplines are beginning to give us a fairly clear idea of what the last 40,000 years of human history really looked like, and in almost no way does it resemble the conventional narrative. Our species did not, in fact, spend most of its history in tiny bands; agriculture did not mark an irreversible threshold in social evolution; the first cities were often robustly egalitarian.” How would that change the way we think about the future? Does the thought that the first cities were

robustly egalitarian inspire hope that we might be able to allow emergence for a system where clusters of egalitarian social groups can interact through competitive collaboration exist? How does the reflection that dominance, violence, and inequality are not related to the perks of modernity open our creative possibilities? How does that hope, or belief, change the way we think and act when designing?

Earlier I proposed the question of how might we transition to a future of ethical relationality, where all lives matter, and “winners” do not use their power to enslave and oppress, through and with these ways of being that trust the outcomes of rivalrous competition?

While unable to answer the question proposed above, I will continue to focus my research on ways of being that do not need rivalrous competition. This is in no way an attempt to vilify those who find a use for this mindset, but simply to create an alternative path, since, as our research has evidenced, that ethical relationality has been the road less travelled in our systems.

The myth, or origin story, explored above sets us for a binary mindset, that humans have two options: either to embrace a simple living, with scarcity, love and fairness; or, chose to fight for wealth, with all the wonders that knowledge and technology have brought to us, but inevitably accepting that someone has to lose. So as individuals that have to live in this system, in this myth of limited existence, we opt, daily, to survive, to win, at the expense of others.

If we were to accept the perception of human nature that states that we are innately compassionate, wired to be generous and loving, this myth creates an irresolvable tension, where to win in the system, you must lose your inner purpose: the desire to serve and connect.

Modify our Language, Shift our Myths

Our Choice of Language both Describes and Creates Realities

Ontology of Language (OL) is a branch of metaphysics and linguistic semantics that “aims to uncover the ontological⁸ categories, notions, and structures that are implicit in the use of natural language, that is, the ontology that a speaker accepts when using a language (Moltmann, 2017). In the perspective of OL, language is also understood as generative, philosophers like J.L Austin explored “performative utterances, sentences which are not only describing a given reality, but also changing the social reality they are describing.” Stating that to declare something is to make a choice, and that choice promotes action. (Filho, Villegas, Morales, Oliveira, Costa, 2008) Language is not only how we perceive and share the world, but also how we co-create it.

⁸ The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being. (“Ontology - Oxford Reference,” 2019)

Through this lens, by changing the expressions of our myths we are making a choice to believe that something else is possible and that in itself is action, it is a step towards transition.

If language is “the ontology that a speaker accepts”, or the version of reality a speaker permits, modifying the way we speak about ourselves, others and our systems are in itself an action for change. By expressing ourselves in different ways we are “changing the reality we are describing”. These ideas highlight the importance of reconsidering our myths, as mentioned earlier. What possibilities are surfaced when we stop saying, therefore thinking, that some people’s ideas matter more than others? When we start saying that humans are innately wired for connection, generosity and love, so we can find ways to flourish through radically different ways of being? When we start believing that a future of joy and abundance is possible for all of us?

I would like to emphasize that the need to prove these utterances as fact, seems to be another mindset caused by our current systems. Yet, we have been creating a reality stemming from opposing assumptions, such as that “humans are innately selfish and violent”, or that “our experience of modernity can only be created through dominance, violence, and oppression” with no irrefutable evidence of such. If we cannot undeniably prove either, why are we so adamant in believing, verbalizing and perpetuating the assumptions that might be the foundations for the aspects of the present we wish to move away from?

Observing our Choices to Perpetuate Undesired Systems

Bureaucratic Language – a concept clarified by Non-Violent Communication (Rosenberg & Chopra, 2015) – is any language that denies you of choice, as the idea of supporting any action because it is “company policy” or verbalizing statements such as “we all have to operate in that reality”, or “this is the way it has always been done”. We can observe our use of bureaucratic language to identify when we might be reinforcing an undesired system by voiding ourselves of our responsibility and capacity for change. When considering such choice of words literally, we can observe that we do not actually have to act in that way, there often is no physical or cognitive limitation to act differently, what we truly mean is that we are not willing to endure the discomfort of the consequences of acting differently. This can be a freeing thought, that ultimately several of the behaviours we tend to blame our systems for are our choices.

Noticing adjectives to categorize superiority: better or worse, good or bad, relevant or irrelevant, or even, truth or assumption is a way to identify the use of language to reinforce how the system works. Noticing this pattern conducts us to the awareness of when and where we are “going through the motions” of the system. It creates space for self-awareness and allows us to take back our sense of agency and promote action.

Systems of Escapism

To find the top insights mentioned above, we observed several other emerging themes. Most are both causes and effects of the creation and perpetuation of our winner-loser myth.

They are divided into three main areas: Lack of Awareness of the System, the Selves, and the Selves through Selves. They are all explorations of how our lack of understanding of what shapes our reality creates barriers for change. They are a bridge between our discovery of the myths and reinforcing systems, and what mindsets we might access to deconstruct them. The lack of awareness of the System refers to cultural/societal patterns that either reinforce the winner-loser myth, stir us away from knowledge or are detrimental to our sense of agency. In the Selves and Selves through Selves, we will explore the same patterns and how they become a barrier for transition, but in the scope of relationality. Selves refer to all that makes us who we are, while the Selves through Selves, explore our process of understanding who we are, through the interaction with others.

Lack of Awareness of the System

Designs for the Pluriverse explore an interesting concept, overlapping the idea of lack of awareness of the systems to not only the growth of its interconnectedness but the expansion of the idea that it is intentionally designed. “(...) Previously taken-for-granted practices, from child rearing and eating to self-development and of course, economy, became the object of explicit calculation and theorization, opening the door to their designing (...)” (Escobar, 2018, p.88). With the development of expert knowledge and modern institutions, social norms were sundered from the life-world and defined heteronomously through expert-driven processes; they were no longer generated by communities from within (ontonomy) nor through open political processes at the local level (autonomy). These all bring conflicting feelings about our power to design our realities, while feeling like our small roles in a complex and interconnected machine renders us powerless.

As of a postcolonial context, Boaventura de Souza Santos (2016) has a complementary thought. What he calls “The epistemologies of the South” do not address the idea of what other cultures consider relevant knowledge, because they are concerned with ways of knowing that very often do not

count as knowledge in a world seeing through the lens of a Eurocentric critical tradition.

Both authors' ideas reinforce the interpretation that our models disconnected us from the most basic needs of the self as well as from a consciousness of the system.

To add an authentic contemporary perspective to the thought, another circumstance that is reinforcing such a disconnection is the distributing of an enormous amount of information through the internet (fake news included). In a democratic context, where censorship is not considered an option, the excess of information might have the same aftermath obstructing us to access what matters and to inhibit us to have a better understanding of our context (Karnal, 2018).

In this section, we will introduce aspects of the language, how we are trained to communicate, and how they affect our comprehension of the world and shape our decisions in both individual and systemic levels. Ultimately, we will explore how an interconnected world ended up losing its ability to see itself, whereas building awareness is central to enable us to understand our context and to create desired futures.

Language and Power Dynamics

As mentioned before, the definition of oppression do not fit our definitions of good, so language is shaped to justify actions of an imposed authority using self-affirmation fallacies. Furthermore, the system might use language to give legal power to adopt punishment, rewards and other forms of coercion to people to support this very system.

How we are trained to communicate dictates how we comprehend the world and influence our actions. An example is using dichotomous words like evil or good, win or lose, right or wrong; that gives us an understanding of a polarized and dualistic world. In some ways that is what Bureaucratic Language does, relying on the distortion of words; it deprives people of choice and perpetuates the status quo by taking away the individual's agency for their actions.

Hannah Arendt (1984) alleges that the "modern bureaucratic man" is unable to see beyond the needs and commands of his career and is unimaginative in his consideration of life's profound ethical and political questions.

Nevertheless, the limitation conceived through bureaucratic language is not limited to our "professional selves", we also use this language when talking about our role as citizens, within a political power that then becomes the detainer of the power to change. So what is the role of reflection

except bringing pain and discomfort? Why reflect if we have little or no agency in our own realities? The lack of reflection leads to a lack of action, perpetuating the system and the feeling of powerlessness, generating a causal loop.

Strictly speaking, the system becomes the priority over individuals or the masses (Rosenberg, 2005).

Loss of Agency

“So as I say, even when you have an officer that recognizes that they’re thinking is a problematic and that they need to be reflective about it, it is still natural to shift into what we would call bad habits.” — Dr. Paul T. Mitchell, Director of Academics of the Canadian Forces College

Power, alongside with narratives (and language), produces realities, domains of objects, and rituals of truth. At the same time, power works in a dynamic network in which we are in a position to be subjected to such power and to exert it (Foucault, 1991). When we see ourselves as mere cogs in a machine, we are out of touch with the importance of such cogs and with the level of agency we all have. When losing sight of our direct impacts in the microsystems, we focus on “grander” results.

Our generalized passiveness and the disconnect to our primal desire to serve each other’s needs blind us from the fact that, for example, a simple choice in work can deeply impact in someone else’s reality in a cascade of positive ripples. We forget that those actions are often more within our reach than solving an enormous financial problem in another continent, for instance.

Retropia. Why do we struggle to co-create futures?

The current technological, democratic, and progressive political situations provide historical minority groups with the opportunity to have their voices propagated and to fight for equality. Moreover, putting in practice policies that failed with the latest world economic crisis led people to the feeling of losing privileges, waking a nostalgic fear which in turn leads us to the idealization of the past.

Retrotopia (Bauman, 2017) is to idealize the past. It is a consequence of a violent, inconstant, and insecure world. Our place in the world is threatened because of the lack of ability to live with differences.

“The fact that has got to be faced is that to abolish class-distinctions means abolishing a part of yourself. Here am I, a typical member of

the middle class. It is easy for me to say that I want to get rid of class-distinctions, but nearly everything I think and do is a result of class-distinctions. (...) I have got to alter myself so completely that at the end I should hardly be recognizable as the same person.” (Orwell, 1985)

With the shift to a neoliberal world, our identity started to be perceived upon the loser/winner mindset, based mainly in our consumer spending power. So when facing a threat, we close ourselves into tribes and build walls, be they visible or invisible. The fear of a world in change might cost our freedom and put us in isolation and solitude, blinding us from envisioning a future.

In rural societies, time is perceived as cyclical. In modern industrial society, time is perceived as linear, towards to the future, progressist. Postmodern society has a different way of experiencing time; it is as it dissipates in an arbitrary sequence of present moments, flattening the flow of time into the continuous present. This post-modern time perception described by Bauman (2015) conveys us incapability of macro viewing and, beyond Retrotopia, it prevents us from envisioning the future, from thinking long-term. Something that the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1984) elaborates as well is the concept of Heterotopia. It describes places and spaces that function in non-hegemonic conditions, worlds within worlds. He compares it to a ship, pondering that in a civilization without ships, dreams are exhausted. In other words, he talks about the importance of having space for emerging creativity to imagine different worlds and, consequently, to speculate futures.

Algorithms reinforcing narratives of exclusion

As of today, algorithms are deeply influencing or making decisions themselves that directly impact the narratives that generate injustice. From those who tell the bank whether or not you are eligible to receive a mortgage, to those who decide who deserves a job.

Cathy O’Neil (2018) shows a case to prove the theory. The police chief of a city in the United States invested in a crime prediction program that works with big data. The program divides the city into quadrants and determines which one is most likely to commit a crime based on the police’s historical record. The program influence police to arrest people from a specific neighbourhood, where most of the population is black. The greater the number of agents sent to the points indicated by the program, the more arrests occur, and thus a vicious circle begins, inflicting the police to arrest blacks for things for which we do not arrest whites. “We continue with the cycle because we continue arresting people from a neighbourhood and the data tells us that we need to return to this neighbourhood, so the police injustice continues” (O’Neil, 2018, n.d.).

Similar to the echo chamber effect – the amplification and reinforcement of beliefs by communication and repetition in social media – algorithms are reinforcing narratives of exclusion.

Lack of Awareness of the Selves

“As human beings, we are on a journey of becoming who we really are. This journey to ourselves — to our Selves — is open-ended and full of disruptions, confusion, and breakdowns, but also breakthroughs. It is a journey that essentially is about accessing the deep sources of the Self.”
(Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013)

So how might we embody ethical relationality and a Pluriverse without taking a hard look at the myths that shape our vision of the world as one with unavoidable enemies? Prior to that, how can we possibly intentionally allow the emergence of a desired future without understanding ourselves and our desires?

In this section, we will not detail the complex layers of how lack of self-awareness has shaped our present, but introduce aspects of that mental model that is becoming more apparent and widely discussed. The objective is to shed light on how these issues impact our daily lives, and not, at this point, try to design a strategy to tackle them. In our CLA process we sought to uncover these pieces of evidences in the form of litanies, systems and worldviews, in sum, these are the themes that originated from those connections.

The Inherent Discomfort of Self-Reflection

Competitive Language makes labels of good and bad, positive or negative, almost impossible to avoid. So in the process of reflecting on our own values, thoughts and behaviours, we might encounter several that we will categorize as “bad”. In our mental model of bad = punishment, we resort to punishing ourselves, often through feelings of guilt, shame, and disappointment.

“Neuroscientists suggest that when an emotional feeling gets triggered that chemicals are released by our brain that flushed through our bloodstream and they activate bodily sensations; it’s sort of a biochemical rush and then flush. What we feel emotionally is felt in the body first as a bodily or physical sensation it doesn’t feel good” — Dr. Joan Rosenberg
(TEDx Talks, 2016, 8:27)

In the TED Talk “Emotional Mastery: The Gifted Wisdom of Unpleasant Feelings” Dr. Joan Rosenberg, explores how we are unprepared to deal with

these uncomfortable feelings. She explains that our experience of feeling capable in the world is directly tied to our capacity to both experiences and move through those unpleasant feelings. She describes 8 feelings we avoid: Sadness, shame, helplessness, anger, vulnerability, embarrassment, disappointment, and frustration (TEDx Talks, 2016).

This avoidance has several consequences, the most relevant to us, is that one path to avoiding is blaming. When we blame others for our frustrations we feed into the cycle of creating enemies, but we also lose our agency. We cannot change that which is outside of our own volition.

In our current systems, when we actively chose to self-develop, it is usually in relation to our personal lives, and personal goals. The knowledge and awareness that surface from such processes is usually siloed in those realms, or only have a secondary impact on our roles as professionals and citizens.

Automaton Tribe

A theme that frequently emerged in Tieni's research, was the idea that our systems create the danger of us operating on "automatic":

"It is beginning to live and act as if anesthetized. You do things for doing things or because they have to be done. It is the logic of "It has always been like this" or "That is the way things are" there is nothing to be discussed or talked about... Anesthetized is a dangerous concept, you can be automatic yet energetic, a yuppie. He is doing but he is not breathing, reflecting." — Raj Rani

Raj, one of the experts interviewed by Tieni is illuminating two interesting ideas, one, the automaton tribe concept, that when operating without reflection, we fully embody the role of a reinforcer of our systems in collapse. We act within the limits of the actions and obligations created to maintain the reality formed by our common myths of existence. The second is that we might have become artful in masquerading this disengagement to the self, we have created distractions that allow us to experience feelings of accomplishment, excitement and joy without truly engaging with our deeper purpose for being. We created a definition of success that doesn't necessarily match our human nature, and we find motivation and satisfaction by seeking it and accomplishing it, inevitably creating "losers" in the process.

"The most common strategy for reality avoidance is denial. We keep ourselves so busy with "urgent" issues that we don't have time to focus on the one that may, in fact, be the most pressing. We are simply too busy rearranging the deck chairs in the Titanic..." (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013)

The Fragmented Self

“The greater the similarity between people, the greater the production, this is the current logic. Capitalism needs all of us to be the same, including tourists. Neoliberalism would not work if people were different.” (Han, 2018)

Similar to Dr. Joan Rosenberg’s talk, there are several other pieces of evidence that this is a topic of growing interest, and it is only most recently that this becomes a common topic amongst business and corporate systems as well. The search for “mental health” in the Fast Company⁹ website brings up 159 articles in 2019 alone (“Search results on Fast Company,” 2019).

In what spaces does co-design for desired futures happen? It goes beyond our roles as parents, spouses, daughters and sons. This design happens in workspaces, in social projects, in collaboration. So what happens when the roles we assume in these spaces are less driven by the values and morals we strive to embody in our personal lives, and look more like the present ones we want to transform?

This is our idea of the fragmented self. While mental health and self-development are still often stigmatized subjects, they have been evolving and growing in our understanding of “personal lives”, the issue is that the learnings that happen in that space are crucial for the kind of collaboration we want to see happen in these other spaces. The fragmented self is one that not only more open to engaging in undesired behaviours, but one with a very frail sense of agency. The Forbes article “How To Be Yourself At Work While Still Being Professional” is evidence of this dilemma, the author mentions the story of “Elaine Welteroth, former Editor-in-Chief at Teen Vogue, – and how she – talked about how she used to keep her head down, work hard and try to fit the mold because she felt that it was the only way she could succeed. It wasn’t until she realized her position in history as the youngest and only black person at Condé Nast to hold that title gave her a responsibility to use her voice for those who would come after her that she committed to being herself at work (Crowley, 2018).

“We notice it. We pretend it isn’t there. This is personal, not professional. This does not concern the work team. That old tale. Conversations that need to happen and are not happening.” — Raj Rani

The fragmented self is a way in which we move through these spaces. We have a version of ourselves for work, a version for family life, a version for certain conversations. One of the issues with our systems today is that the versions of ourselves that we bring forth as “professionals” are often ones that we do not like if we stop to reflect about them. The idea of fragmented selves is not to be confused with a concept of multiple selves, or, one that

⁹ Fast Company is the world’s leading business media brand, with an editorial focus on innovation in technology, leadership, world changing ideas, creativity, and design. (“About Us,” 2017)

acknowledges that several forms of ourselves co-exist and evolve through time. The difference is that the multiple selves can be willingly accessed in service of authentic and generous purposes. One can access a particular side of themselves in order to connect to others, in authenticity. The fragmented self, on the other hand, is a forced separation of what is true and appreciated, for the purpose of surviving our current failing systems.

Emergence of Awareness

The discomfort to reflect, the fragmented self, and the automaton tribes are barriers for us to seek our Selves in our current reality. They also reinforce each other, the fragmented self, even if seeking development and purpose in the “personal” realm, often finds himself unable to enact those discoveries in other areas of life. If we are approaching reality as a highly interconnected web of systems, this “barrier” between “personal” “professional” or “citizen” selves is merely a temporary one, for movements created in one, will ultimately affect the other. Through that lens, the desire of addressing these issues come not from a disbelief in the natural flows of existence, but the desire to become a means for this process to emerge. This process includes being able to hold space for our discomforts with reality and with ourselves to emerge in order to be dealt with, the capacity to bring those insights into all spaces in which we design a reality, and be able to not only invite regular reflection but constant action.

Lack of Awareness of the Self Through the Selves

Dialogue, Conversation, and Emergence

In “Leading from the Emerging Future” the authors say that “in order to discover true self-knowledge, we have to bend the beam of scientific observation back onto the observing self. Similar to our conclusions, Schamer and Kaufer see this ability to see yourself through others as the means for “transformation of the individual, of relationships, of institutions, and of society.

As mentioned earlier, our objective with the CLA was not to find answers for these issues but observe their manifestations within our reality. Through this exercise, the feeling of a world of divides became tangible, seeing evidence of trends and countertrends, and in between our ineptitude to converge, and expand those visions of reality into evolved ones.

In UTheory, as in our “From Debate to Dialogue” workshop, we found that the path for this convergence or “beam of observation” is mainly Dialogue. As mentioned earlier, we found that by focusing on dialogue, we are already isolating selves that are more comfortable connecting through debate, or

other forms of sharing. This to us, is a point of attention, to how easily we can slip back into dichotomous and competitive thinking, even while actively searching for bridges for collaboration. This is observation in itself was an attempt to embody the constant bending of the beam, allowing ourselves to evolve our ideas through the perspective of others.

There is no Self

“It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories.”

(Haraway, 2016, p35)

One of the most profound — and even damaging — consequences of the rationalistic tradition are the belief in the individual (Escobar, 2018). This belief, one might say, constitutes one of design’s main wicked problems. Throughout the centuries, colonialism, modernization, development, and globalization have been the economic and political projects that carry with them into most other world cultures the Trojan horse of the individual, destroying communal and place-based forms of relating (Esteva and Prakash, 1998).

Recurrently, when trying to explore themes related to “the Selves” and “Others” we find a difficulty to clarify which ideas pertain to each. This challenge comes, most likely, from our minds operating from these fundamental myths, that pushes us to try to segment Selves and Others to simplify an understanding that is seemingly complex. As Arturo continues to detail on the theme of self and relationality “the mind/self is an emergent property of a distributed network, or rather of a patchwork of subnetworks, from neurons to language and symbols, assembled by a complex process of tinkering, which neither has a uniform structure nor is the result of a unified design (e.g., Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991, 105; Sharma 2015). In the end, one can say that “the cognitive self is its own implementation: its history and its action are of one piece” (Varela 1999, 54; italics in the original). Alternatively, one might say that the self is a nexus “within a continuously unfolding field of relations.” (Ingold 2011, xii)

This notion of relationality unites not only self, and others with the understanding of self, but systems and things alike. There is no distinction between self and reality. Through that perspective, the desire to gain awareness of the self inevitably moves through the ability to see others, and the realities we co-exist in.

In this realization, we shared ambiguous feelings of simplicity and complexity in relation to the work that has to be done in order to embark on a path of world transition. The complexity of the layers of “truth” that have to be deconstructed in order to create space for truly new possibilities to emerge, and the simplicity of making that choice: of embracing discomfort to see and experiment living with new “truths”.

A Complex System of Reinforcement

“Many kinds of failure of ongoingness¹⁰ crumble lifeways in our times of onrushing extinctions, exterminations, wars, extractions, and genocides. Many kinds of absence, or threatened absence, must be brought into ongoing response-ability, not in the abstract but in homely storied cultivated practice.” (Haraway, 2016, p. 132)

¹⁰ Ongoingness is a term defined by Donna Haraway as “that is, nurturing, or inventing, or discovering, or somehow cobbling together ways for living and dying well with each other in the tissues of an earth whose very habitability is threatened. (Haraway, 2016, p. 132)

The most significant learnings from the CLA method were what systems we are trying to break away from (myths that sustain the idea that a world of rivalrous competition is our only way of being) and how many layers of reinforcing systems we have created that make transition so slow and often, painful. One of these reinforcing systems is our use of language, which I will detail in the next section of the paper.

Our CLA began with an investigation of a system we believe is failing. The divides can be further specified, to evidence the overlaps with our own discoveries of decay of our current system. “A disconnect between the infinite growth imperative and the finite resources of Planet Earth.” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p.14); stemming back to the myth that growth success, and success, guarantee dominance and plentiful survival. We have created the dysfunctional belief that abundance is only achieved through exploitation – confusing abundance with wealth, when in fact, an abundance mindset means that there is plenty for everyone, without the necessity to accumulate in the first place. Unreasonable, yet seemingly logic in the limitations of our cartesian mental model. “A disconnect between gross domestic product (GDP) and well-being. — In detail — “This disconnect shows up as a bubble of material consumption that does not advance actual well-being. Research on developed countries shows that, contrary to popular belief, higher GDP and higher material consumption do not translate into more well-being....” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p.15). The recognition that our disconnect to the self, is feeding into this broken system, where we continuously try to fill our existential holes with things. We see the world through a fragmented self, that also separates reason and emotion, disregarding

the sense that, as Escobar elucidates through Maturana's quote "it is our emotions that determine the rational domain in which we operate as rational beings at any instant" (1997, 5); in other words even the decision to be rational is an emotional decision. The consequences are far from negligible: "We are rarely aware that it is our emotions that guide our living even when we claim that we being rational... and in the long run we do not understand our cultural existence" (Escobar, 2018, p.82). Finally, the "A disconnect between the Haves and the Have Nots... The increasing polarization of wealth and income undermines equal access to opportunity and thus erodes basic human rights in society today" (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p.16). The deep divide we have designed and sustained through decades. Symptoms of our lack of awareness of the myths that shape reality, and reality, through the layers of systems, self, and self through others.

Failure is a driver for change.

"[Fanatics of western civilization] regard the highly contingent achievements of our culture as the final form and norm of human existence." – Reinhold Niebuhr

As clarified earlier, every trend has a countertrend, often just as powerful. In this current state of collapse and divide, we see two forceful movements that share the desire for change: one that looks at the past for solutions, and one that is attempting to allow a different future to emerge. The intention of this simplification is not to lead to categorization, in the field of ambiguity we have been exploring, both movements may and probably do co-exist amongst each of us. The intention is to consider why our shared failure has not been strong enough for us to fully transition, or open the possibility that this statement in itself is also a myth. Our reality is always, transitional, and our frustration with lack of change comes from the same myths we want to deconstruct, ones that see reality as human-centered, instead of life-centered, and that desperately needs to control existence by design.

So Why failure hasn't provoked a complete change yet?

"These bubbles and structural disconnects produce systems that are designed not to learn. The systems operate through delayed or broken feedback loops that prevent decision-makers from experiencing and personally feeling the impact of their decisions. In our current complex global systems, decision-makers often affect large groups of people with their actions but never see, feel, or become aware of their actions'

consequences. Without feedback, or with delayed feedback, there is no learning. As a result, institutions tend to change too little and too late.”
(Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p 18)

For some, our current situation incites a sense of urgency, especially in the context of the ecological divide. Several experts point to the notion that the world has “just over a decade to get climate change under control.” In their assessment, the term failure is also used to describe our current struggles. “The world stands on the brink of failure when it comes to holding global warming to moderate levels, and nations will need to take “unprecedented” actions to cut their carbon emissions over the next decade, according to a landmark report by the top scientific body studying climate change” (Mooney & Dennis, 2018). Following the theme of interconnectedness, we have been exploring through the CLA method, focussing our haste only to the matters of climate change, or designs “wicked problems” might be part of our default cognitive limitation. We fail to see that profound changes in the self, and how we interact with others are as important as our, grandiose itch, to design the whole.

Another barrier for change is our shared definition for success: “favorable or desired outcome; also: the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence” — and eminence being — : a position of prominence or superiority 2 : one that is eminent, prominent, or lofty: such as; a : a person of high rank or attainments” (“Definition of SUCCESS,” 2019). If we exist in a system that organizes in hierarchies and divides, where some achieve said wealth and superiority, is it, failing? There is a growing trend of questioning this definition, that can be observed by doing that online research, thousands of articles such as “A New Definition of Success” (Organ, 2013) come up. They are evidence of a future, still fragmented, that desires to emerge from within our mental models. Some, touch upon the importance of community, “Part of having a successful career is being able to share the journey with others.” (Hall, 2018, n.a.). Moreover, others mention self-development as “...It is learning from external paradigms of accomplishment while listening to a compassionate inner voice. It is the endless pursuit of personal betterment balanced with a comfortable appreciation of the status quo.” (Organ, 2013, n.a.). They are attempts to address the symptoms and not the core issues of our failures.

Our systems also continuously battle to save themselves, the financial crash of September 2008 is a clear example, as Mike Collins wrote in a 2015 article, “Most people think that the big bank bailout was the \$700 billion that the treasury department used to save the banks during the financial crash in September of 2008. But this is a long way from the truth because the bailout

is still ongoing. Yes, it was trillions not billions and the banks are now larger and still too big to fail. But it isn't just the government bailout money that tells the story of the bailout. This is a story about lies, cheating, and a multi-faceted corruption which was often criminal" (Collins, 2015).

They are still, as this paper is, restrained by our restrictive myths. Musings about existence that separate, self, from selves, and systems. In this disconnected definition, we are still able to see signs of success, be it in old or most recent expanded definitions, within the failure of the whole. It is in this context that ideas are molded by both retropias, visions of the future, divides, and emerging feelings of the whole.

All myths create worldviews and systems, and in a loop of influence, systems reinforce or re-create worldviews and myths. It is a powerful and complex structure, to shift, nevertheless break. In the following section, I will explore how language can become a powerful tool for us to break out of reinforcing systems, both internal and external, in search of transition into a desired future.

Conclusion

This research started exploring how the system of marginalization is sustained primarily in favelas in Rio through the eyes of the most marginalized. After the outcomes of a co-designed system map, there was a need to go further with this investigation for two reasons. First, it is necessary to take a closer look at our nature, what drives and shapes our behaviour. Furthermore, recognizing how these unconscious narratives shape our realities allows us to establish a foundation for core issue-oriented problem-solving.

Learnings

Doing field research showed the complexity of the story this research seeks to tell and brought to light new ways to understand, assimilate and appreciate empathy, that to me unfolds into respect and knowledge exchange. It also stimulated me to question empathy itself as being enough – and to what extent it can and should be reached – to become relevant in design processes.

While looking for a framework to cope with an entangled problem of tricky relationships, it was possible to explore techniques once designed for innovation in other fields or realities, adapting them into tools to leverage social changes of (perhaps) unimaginable complexities to those who created them in the first place. Thinking about the rationale behind dialogic design methods, and how none of them seemed to fit into this stage of the research, encouraged me to find new ways to interact with the actors involved in the system. CLA is an example of a valuable and flexible method that allowed me to explore new possibilities and to shape it into this research needs.

Outcomes

The map of the system of marginalization of favelas in Rio is already a valuable outcome. It exposes the criminalization of poverty and racism, disguised and reinforced by both official (school, history books) and non-official (mainstream media, unconscious beliefs) narratives, since before favelas even existed.

Mapping the actors involved and their relationships made it possible to go further and investigate why and how the system is maintained. Myths that sustain the idea of a world of rivalrous competition are getting on the way for a transition to more balanced power dynamics. From this insight, it became even more evident that we are not moving forward until we start creating compelling connections, as well expressed by Guilherme Pimentel, one of the experts interviewed for the research:

“There are unresolved issues in the history of the country. There is one Brazil that believes in violence and one Brazil that believes in freedom. Those who believe in violence see diversity as a limit for their interest. It comprises a privilege system that has slavery and colonial bases and believes that violence is regenerative and educational. The Brazil that believes in freedom is the one that proposes diversity, that fights for freedom since the Indians and the slaves; that struggles to survive every day, when what they really want is to live. They deal with all types of violence: from firearms to society’s backlash against the poor and the Black. For example, if you do not have sanitation, you will miss school more often because it will make you sicker and it will jeopardize your parents’ work. It is a chain reaction of incalculable effects. These two Brazils are indissoluble, and yet we still have not figured it out. It is pointless to scream to each other from different sides of the wall. One will never have substance for change if they change their language but do not change their worldview.” – Guilherme Pimentel

The Shift

The explanation for the behaviours and decisions is a combination of elements, presented in the “Zeitgeist” section. However, the heart of it all can be compiled in one sentiment: **fear**.

Fear is a very compelling emotion capable of blinding ourselves from our needs and desires, creating results that we do not genuinely want. Because of fear we have been putting security over freedom, idealizing the past, giving

up on the genuine human connections and compassion. We are diverted to believe that we are better off locked in our gated communities paying for private security and finding scapegoats to project our discomfort.

Fear is feeding the winner–loser myth. The shift we need for changing the culture and the way we shape our relationships is a transition from winner–loser myth to the abundance myth. Abundance not in the sense of accumulation, as the dictionary defines it, but the paradigm that there is plenty for everyone; beyond that, it does not mean equally distributed, but fairly distributed.

Opening up conversations and surfacing different perspectives of the problem is a starting point to move towards the belief that if someone is winning others may not necessarily be losing, which, in turn, allows emergence for disruptive changes in the system.

Currently, there are some initiatives in favelas that partially reflect such belief. The *#nóspornós* movement and the expression *tamo junto* are manifestations of the strong bond of solidarity, but it is constrained by the limitations of the community. Moving forward, it would be interesting to study these phenomena and consider how they could be used and amplified as leverage for change.

Limitations of the Study

As a designer whose practices are based on cooperation, and human–centric and system–oriented research, it implies that different voices in the system should be heard, however at this phase of the study it would be impractical to connect different actors. Interviews or separate workshops with the participation of other groups' representatives could mitigate this lack of dialogue, nonetheless, the timeframe to develop this MRP and the priority of going on the field made this phase not possible to be concluded.

Going on the field was extremely important and provided many insights. Still, the experience could have been much more fruitful if I had used traits of those who have ethnographic experience through collaborative work.

Researching favelas in Rio, while living in Canada limited the development of relationships with favelados. Bringing favelados to participate from the beginning to end in a team approach and engage them in the methods and tools applied would be of great value for accessibility. This can be considered an element of the future workshop model that I would create in order to this work to be continued by favelados themselves.

Moving Forward

This research is the first part of a larger project with a more long-term ambition to profound changes that use (technological, intellectual, and human) resources to create collective, feasible, and viable initiatives to impact a social system.

How the system of marginalization of favelas works may seem limited to a specific territory, but it exposes deeper drives of a malfunctioning society — also, the more information, the more participative the citizens. The short-term objective is to share this particular way to tell the story as a powerful action to create a new narrative starting from favelados themselves. I believe that audiovisual mediums can help make it accessible to a significant number of people.

I would also go back to favelas with the findings from the CLA process for a reflexive response, and explore how could that response empower them and the research itself.

Another important path to follow would be to set the framework to be replicable, finding ways to empower other projects within the same domain.

There is a long investigation ahead to unravel how to make the shift into an abundance myth to move forward to effective, disruptive, and collective changes.

In conjunction with all said, the findings from this research reiterate the belief that we live in an interconnected and interdependent world. On the other hand, present and future have no place for favelados. Those who have the most power to change have no recognition of such territories and people. That means that the power to change have to be recognized within other domains.

A system that believes that killing people will reduce crime rates is a broken system. A system that induces the desire to be the oppressor in its people is a broken system. A system that boasts oppressors in its history books is a broken system. We can not cope with this world anymore. It is time for a change, and not led only by the ones that were already in power.

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” – Nelson Mandela

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