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# Film as shared ethnography

In the field, in the editing suite, on the air

*Carolina Caffé and Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji*

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## Abstract

This article discusses an anthropological project centred on the production of audiovisual and hypermedia works, begun in 2009 with the Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map and completed in 2011 with the release of the ethnographic film *Art and the Street*. The project's guiding premise was Jean Rouch's concept of *shared anthropology*, but with its own particularities reflecting the contemporary world, including the intensification of image production and sharing, as well as the emergence of various collaborative forms of information production based around the popularization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). We discuss three distinct moments of this shared visual anthropology project: fieldwork, editing and screenings of the ethnographic films.

**Keywords:** ethnographic film, shared anthropology, urban periphery, visual anthropology, street art

## Resumo

Analizamos neste artigo um projeto de realização etnográfica de produtos audiovisuais e hipermediáticos iniciado em 2009, com o Mapa das Artes de Cidade Tiradentes, e concluído em 2011, com o lançamento do filme *A arte e a rua*. O projeto teve como pressuposto o conceito de Jean Rouch de *antropologia compartilhada*, mas possui suas especificidades, uma vez que foi desenvolvido em um momento marcado pela intensificação da produção e compartilhamento de imagens, assim como pela emergência de variadas formas colaborativas de produção de informação, dada a popularização das Tecnologias da Informação e Comunicação. Abordamos três momentos distintos deste projeto de antropologia visual compartilhada: a pesquisa de campo, a ilha de edição, e as exibições dos filmes etnográficos.

**Palavras-chave:** filme etnográfico, antropologia compartilhada, periferia urbana, antropologia visual, arte de rua

# Film as shared ethnography

In the field, in the editing suite, on the air<sup>1</sup>

Carolina Caffé<sup>2</sup> and Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji<sup>3</sup>



Hylario and Bob Jay, protagonists of the films *From Over on the East Side* and *Art and the Street*. Photo by Eric Brochu.

In an article in the edited book *Film as Ethnography*, Peter Crawford (1995) compares the processes of representation in ethnographic film and text in terms of the relations of presence and distance involved in their production. Crawford analyzes the sensuality of film and the intelligibility of text, film as presence and approximation, text as absence and reflection. The author's objective is not to essentialize these languages but to identify the possibilities for swapping around their properties: how can film be intelligible and even

<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of research carried out with support from FAPESP, the Instituto Pólis and the Centro Cultural da Espanha\_SP. The ethnographic films discussed here were produced with the support of the Etnodoc 2009 competition, along with the Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia (LISA – Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology) of the Universidade de São Paulo (University of São Paulo).

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explanatory? How can writing express a sensual comprehension of what ‘being there’ is all about?

In this article we examine some of these questions, focusing especially on representational processes involving film, text and hypertext as part of an ethnographic project for producing audiovisual and hypermedia works, begun in 2009 with the Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map and completed in 2011 with the launch of the film *Art and the Street*, directed by the authors of this article. These processes were informed by Rouch’s project of a shared anthropology but with their own particularities, reflecting a contemporary context of intense image production and sharing, as well as the emergence of diverse collaborative forms of information production based on the popularization of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies). We explore three distinct moments of this project of shared visual anthropology: field research, the editing suite, and the screening of ethnographic films. Moments shaped by different experiences of presence and distance, which, analyzed now, at a distance, reveal peculiarities in the processes of producing knowledge through audiovisual ethnography.

## Shared Audiovisual Anthropology

Technological advances and digital culture represent huge challenges and possibilities for ethnographic production and its visual expression. If film was already an ideal medium for sharing anthropology in Jean Rouch’s view,<sup>4</sup> what developments can we expect for our discipline given the many new possibilities for producing and sharing information available today, with digital technologies under constant development and the growing tendency for shared production of visual information? To *share* is, of course, a native category in the virtual world, a verb as popular as to *like* in the Facebook era. Virtual

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4 Jean Rouch’s proposal for a shared anthropology has been a huge source of inspiration for our own ethnographic film projects. Responsible for producing more than 100 films from the mid-twentieth century until his death in 2004, Rouch saw cinema as a form of producing knowledge with the Africans with whom he conducted his research. In contrast to academic texts, films could be seen and discussed by his interlocutors. In these films coauthorship was experienced in a radical form by Rouch and his African friends. For a deeper discussion of Jean Rouch and his proposal for a shared anthropology see, for instance, Piau (2000). In Caffé & Hikiji (2012b) we provided a more detailed discussion of the collaborative processes informing our research, from the mapping project developed in 2009 to the films produced in 2010 and 2011.

networks and platforms, as well as more accessible equipment for recording image and sound, are key elements of a complex technological mosaic that is shaping contemporary social transformations, leading to an ever increasing incorporation of digital communication technologies into everyday life.

While in the 1960s visionaries like Worth and Adair (1972) had the intuition that film cameras could be handed over to the Navajo in order for the researcher to get closer to the gaze of *the other* in an original way, today we are able to *connect* images *already* produced and widely disseminated, many of them by our own interlocutors who claim the place of authors of their own histories and narratives.<sup>5</sup> This decentralization of the production of audiovisual narratives, a role now assumed by people previously subjected to the gaze of the filmmaker/anthropologist, is presenting Visual Anthropology with important contributions, political and aesthetic transformations and new challenges.

The separation between technique and aesthetic can no longer be conceived dichotomously. Javier Bustamante (2012) argues that technological networks are not just an instrument of control or a tool enhancing our forms of communication. Today technological networks are the very arena in which some of the most significant battles in the areas of culture and human rights are taking place, provoking deep transformations in sociopolitical life.

Amid this whirlwind of new functions and possibilities for producing images, it is essential to comprehend and resituate the place occupied by anthropological audiovisual study and production. Here we present a number of reflections concerning the processes involved in the production of the ethnographic film *Art and the Street* (2011), as well as two productions that preceded this film, the Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map (2009) and the short film *From over on the East Side* (2010). Having completed these productions, we can reflect on how concepts and methods formulated in the field of Audiovisual Anthropology have been incorporated into our research and filming practices, as well as highlight the surprises specific to the art of sharing knowledge production.

The article's subtitle emphasizes three primordial aspects of the research

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5 In *Cinema de quebrada* [Quebrada's cinema; available at <http://vimeo.com/lisausp/quebradascinema>] (Hikiji 2008) we show the appropriation of audiovisual production processes by collectives of residents from the São Paulo outskirts. This movement is the topic of a number of articles (Hikiji 2010 and 2009) and discussed on the blog [www.fflch.usp.br/da/antropologiacompartilhada](http://www.fflch.usp.br/da/antropologiacompartilhada).

processes that we discuss here: field, editing suite and air. The appropriation of terms associated with nature to describe places of extensive technological experimentation is undoubtedly inspiring: the field, in which we exploit all our anthropological technique; the suite,<sup>6</sup> a computerized paradise, the space where worlds are created through modern mimetic machines (Taussig 1993), a place of real isolation, or *distancing* to use Crawford's term (1995); and the air, a world without defined boundaries where the work is completed by its eventual dissemination in waves, bands of light, bytes of information, which are experienced and finally given new meanings by the spectator. We explore these spaces as the starting points for thinking of film as ethnography.

## In the field

We can begin by specifying that our *field* is located in the city, or rather, in a city within the city of São Paulo, the gigantic district called Cidade Tiradentes. In the field we observed the forms in which the artists who inhabit this urban territory thematize it through their bodies, rhythms, writings and traces.

Cidade Tiradentes was formed in the 1980s, planned by the local government as a large outlying and monofunctional housing complex (a 'dormitory town') primarily intended to relocate populations affected by public works. Thought to be the largest low-cost housing complex in Latin America, Cidade Tiradentes contains around 50,000 housing units and more than 250,000 inhabitants (USINA 2003). Clandestine and irregular dwellings and favelas soon formed next to these housing estates. Situated in the extreme eastern portion of São Paulo, 35 kilometres from the city centre, the district had almost no urban infrastructure (there were no schools, supermarkets, banks or hospitals). In 2003 the Bairro Legal Program introduced an action plan for reurbanizing Cidade Tiradentes. Following a series of diagnostic surveys, the district received investments to improve the functioning of the urban space, including the installation of security and sanitation facilities, the implantation of a sub-prefecture, and so on. These interventions led to profound transformations in the region's cultural and artistic life.

We first discovered Cidade Tiradentes through a sociocultural mapping

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6 TN: the term for (editing) suite in Portuguese is *ilha*, island.





Cidade Tiradentes, frame of the film *Art and the Street*. Image: Rafael Nobre.

project implemented in 2009 by the Instituto Pólis with support from the Centro Cultural da Espanha\_SP entitled a “Cartovideography of the Youth Dynamics of Cidade Tiradentes: Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map.” The outcome of this research was an interactive virtual map ([www.cidadetiradentes.org.br](http://www.cidadetiradentes.org.br)) showing cultural spaces, artists and their productions based on a collaborative enterprise involving local residents and primarily involving audiovisual research. The project team included researchers from the Instituto Pólis, ethnographic and audiovisual consultants, and four residents from Cidade Tiradentes involved in artistic activities in the district. We, the two authors of the present article, formed part of the team.<sup>7</sup>

Describing our immersion in the field implies presenting the methodology used to carry out the mapping work, as well as, subsequently, the process of producing the ethnographic film.<sup>8</sup> The collaborative process of the Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map involved professionals from a variety of backgrounds

7 Carolina Caffé, Hamilton Faria and Luis Eduardo Tavares formed the coordination team of the Instituto Pólis project, while Rose Satiko worked as ethnographic consultant and Eliane Caffé took part in the initial phase as the audiovisual consultant. The researcher-residents were Daniel Hylario, Bob Jay, Cláudia Canto and Cláudio Tio-Pac.

8 Part of this discussion was presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Images of Culture/Culture of Images Seminar held in August 2011. We provide a more detailed analysis of the languages with which we worked in the film *Art and the Street* in Caffé & Hikiji 2012b.

and researcher-residents, and began with weekly meetings where we discussed the nature of the maps as tools for representing *and* producing reality and learnt more about the political motivations of each researcher-resident from Cidade Tiradentes.

We listened to the researcher-residents tell their life histories and stories about the district, and we began to comprehend the local *categories* concerning the territory, sociability, the artistic field and social problems.

Working with these researcher-residents we formulated the questions and problems that then provided the basis for scripting the interviews used to compile the Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map. Using a hand-held video camera and this script, the researchers recorded more than 50 interviews. The pre-fabricated script was appropriated differently according to each situation. Creative solutions were tested: interviews at night, lit by car headlights; interview questions jotted down on bits of paper and picked out at random to be answered by interviewees; re-enactments created by the district's residents as a way of presenting the local 'characters.'

The criteria for selecting artists for interview also stemmed from a wide-ranging discussion with the team, which defined the following: distribution (the groups should be representative of the district's twenty-two sectors); the level of recognition of the groups within the district; and the diversity of styles in each art form. The knowledge network of the researcher-residents was effectively mobilized and subjectivity incorporated as a key element in our mapping project. The team shared the idea that the map would never be neutral and that its starting point would be the researcher-residents themselves and their histories, desires and journeys within the territory.

We invited the Artistic Communication Nucleus (*Núcleo de Comunicação Artística: NCA*),<sup>9</sup> a video making collective from the southern outskirts of São Paulo, to edit the videos produced by the researcher-residents. We considered it important that the editors knew the outskirts and shared with the researchers the experience of living the day-to-day reality of the 'quebradas'.<sup>10</sup> The end result can be conferred in the videos edited by the collective, posted on the website [www.cidadetiradentes.org.br](http://www.cidadetiradentes.org.br).

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9 NCA (Alternative Communication Nucleus), see <http://ncanarede.blogspot.com/>

10 'Quebrada' is the native category used to designate the outskirts of the city, spaces where our protagonists live.



Along with the videos, the site provides information on Cidade Tiradentes's artists in the form of photos, music and texts using mashup technology, which combines virtual platforms such as Google Maps, YouTube and Flickr to create a new personalized service. Layered over a physical and geographic map of the district in the eastern zone, it enables the localization of people, groups, spaces and events related to the languages of music, dance, audiovisual production, the visual arts, literature and theatre.

After construction of the site was complete, we were faced with an extensive body of research material that required another form of treatment. In the mapping process we met artists whose works revealed highly original ideas concerning the territory's life and transformation. An ethnographic film seemed a good way to develop questions that had emerged in the field but that needed more space and time to be expressed through images and sounds.

Between 2010 and 2011 with the support of the Etnodoc competition (Competition for Ethnographic Documentaries on Intangible Heritage) run by Brazil's National Heritage Institute (IPHAN) we made the ethnographic films *From over on the East Side* (2010) and *Art and the Street* (2011)<sup>11</sup> in collaboration with the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology (Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia<sup>12</sup>) of the University of São Paulo (LISA-USP) and the Instituto Pólis.

The main investigative theme of the two films was the conflict between street art in Cidade Tiradentes and the spatial and sociocultural changes occurring in this district. The transformation in street art depicted in the films also provides an insight into the tensions generated by the dispute for public space and for the right to communication.

We followed the experience of four groups linked to hip hop that had come into being as the district expanded and who explored its challenges and dreams in their work: the 5 Zonas graffiti group; the RDM (Rapazeada Do

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11 Both the films, with research, direction and script by the authors of this article, focus on the same context, *Lá do Leste* (2010, 28 min.), available in full at <http://vimeo.com/lisausp/ladoleste>, being the short film that gave rise to the medium length *Art and the Street* (2011, 46 min.), available in full at <http://vimeo.com/lisausp/aartesea rua> and at LISA (<http://www.lisa.usp.br>).

12 LISA-USP, inaugurated in 1991, functions as a centre for research and training for students in the fields of visual anthropology and ethnomusicology, enabling lecturers, students and researchers to produce and make use of audio and visual recordings. Sylvia Caiuby Novaes is the coordinator and Rose Satiko is the vice-coordinator of the laboratory. The videos produced in LISA can be viewed at [vimeo.com/lisausp](http://vimeo.com/lisausp), and the laboratory's site is [www.lisa.usp.br](http://www.lisa.usp.br).

Morro) rap group; the Tiradentes Street Dancers group and the Relato Final gospel rap group.

It is worth noting that the protagonists of the ethnographic films include two researcher-residents from the Cidade Tiradentes Arts Map project: Bob Jay, the rapper from RDM, one of the rap groups with a long history in Cidade Tiradentes, and Daniel Hylario, a cultural activist with close contact with the district's artistic world and young people.

The fact that our team included two researchers with whom we had maintained contact for around a year prior to making the film resulted in a process of joint creation, spanning from the choice of topics and situations to be explored in the film, to defining the script and cinematographic language.

Working alongside Bob Jay, Daniel Hylario and their partners in Cidade Tiradentes, we discussed *what* and *how* to film on location: important issues, everyday situations that could be explored, prominent moments in the artistic production of each group, and their forms of presenting their own artistic language.

Writing the documentary's script was therefore a highly collaborative process, and most of the situations filmed were conceived in conjunction with the artists starring in the film, then organized and systemized by ourselves, the directors. How should the meeting of the rap group's members be shown? "We always meet in a LAN house or at a barbecue held at the house of one of us." The task of holding a barbecue for a day of filming and taking a significant number of the RDM family – more than two dozen people – to Bob Jay's house was a pleasurable job for the film's production team.

As well as the locations, the central question guiding the production (the transformation of the territory caused by urbanization of the periphery and the dialogue with street artists with this transformation) resulted directly from the dialogue with the film's protagonists. They are all artists born or raised in the São Paulo outskirts during the 1980s and linked to the hip hop movement. Those involved in the mapping work were selected on the basis of their locally recognized history of political activism and their critical ideas concerning cultural disputes in the region.

Although funk is the dominant musical language in the community today, the Arts Map showed mostly different types of street art and the hip hop movement. This was due to the 'network of contacts' and knowledge of the



Daniel Hylario, protagonist, producer and handycam director of the film *Art and the Street*. Photo: Rosana Shimura.

researchers involved in the project, closer to the artistic generation of the 1990s than the young generation properly speaking or even the older artists. One result of this unplanned ‘selection’ was the compilation of a particular history of the district, the transformation of the territory and the groups linked to street art. It is the gaze of these artists and residents, profoundly shaped by hip hop and by the experience of living in the outskirts of the city, that we aimed to depict in the films.

Daniel Hylario, a researcher for the Arts Map and the protagonist-narrator of *Art and the Street*, occupies a central place in the shared knowledge production that we pursued first in mapping the area and then through the ethnographic films. Ever since the mapping project, Daniel had surprised us with his emphatic appropriation of the district’s history and transformation, his critical and original view of Cidade Tiradentes. He participated intensely in the film’s production from the research phase to the field trips, the choice of filming locations, initial conversations with the groups and finally to the elaboration of the scripts for the daily filming. Daniel was also responsible for coordinating the handycam work, one of the languages we chose to record the images and sounds. In the film’s credits Daniel is identified as the handycam director and local producer.

Inspired by the idea of the *câmera-bastão* or ‘baton camera’ proposed by filmmaker Eliane Caffé,<sup>13</sup> we encouraged some of our protagonists to take the production’s camera to record their everyday life: they could film their work, the district and the preparations for the presentations, as well as simply filming whatever they found interesting. Along with Daniel Hylario, others who used the camera to record their universe without the team’s presence included Bob Jay and Michelle Fleury, the wife of Denilson, the evangelical rapper from Relato Final. Daniel coordinated ‘handing the baton’ to the other protagonists. The results were so surprising that they formed an important part of the final edit of the film.

In a striking sequence captured with the ‘baton camera’ we see a young black man walking in the dark while whispering to the camera: “it’s exactly 04:40, we are walking to work, this is my day-to-day life.” In a series of shots narrated in the first person, always holding the camera, which sometimes swivels round to film his own face, Bob Jay, the rapper from RDM, describes his working day en route from Cidade Tiradentes to the centre – on foot and by public transport – to his eventual arrival in the tunnels where he works ‘pushing cable,’ building new underground train lines. The long day is constructed in Bob Jay’s film through his narration of different time points: 04:40, when he gets up to “earn the bread for the family”; “06:05 a.m. on the way to work,” because as Gabuks, his musical partner, says as he accompanies Bob Jay on the way to work, “we rap, but we’re also workers: while you’re warm under your blanket, well us layabouts are going to work to earn the bread for the women, right?”; 11:30 when Bob Jay yells to his work mates in the subterranean recesses of the city: “Let`s lunch, you swarm of bats!”

The language of the baton camera brings us closer to the everyday situations of our protagonists, like the one describe above, seen from their own point of view and offering us another dimension of life in the São Paulo outskirts. Despite the shakes, jumps and other aesthetic ‘noise’ typical to this kind of recording, incorporating the baton camera filming into the

13 The expression *câmera-bastão* (baton camera) comes from Eliane Caffé. In her first experiences as a documentary filmmaker, Eliane used the methodology for the narrative construction of *Milágrimas* (2008), a film depicting the show created by dancer Ivaldo Bertazo with dancers living in the city’s outskirts. The methodology involved giving a handycam to Bertazo’s dancers after the rehearsals. Each one came back to Eliane with a ‘piece’ of their lives, a form of representing their reality in the São Paulo outskirts. We discuss this work further in an article based on the paper presented at the Images of Culture/Culture of Images seminar, now in press.

documentary was in some ways also an acceptance of the residues and impurities of everyday life. The form is also the content.

Another language that we chose to develop in the film was what we called experimental or artistic-collaborative. Our proposal was to present the art of our interlocutors in the film, based on direct audiovisual experimentation with the language produced by the protagonists.

We set out from the conception of audiovisual work as an ideal means of exploring the sensory and aesthetic universe, especially the expressive forms that we examine: music, dance, visual arts. Images and sounds enable the presentation of aspects of artistic practices that are not always translatable in words: timbres, emphases, movements, in the case of music; colours, forms, intentions, in the case of the visual arts; body techniques, expressions and styles, in the case of dance; the transformation of subjects into a moment of performance, in all the arts. As the anthropologist and filmmaker David MacDougall (1998) proposes, video suggests alternative modes of expressing sensory and social experience.

The participation of the protagonists in the production of this part of the film was also a central dimension. In the initial meetings with each of the groups, we proposed the creation of an artistic video featuring their work. All the participants were very excited by the idea, but we managed to make this project a reality with just two of the four groups.

From the outset graffiti was clearly one of the most visual forms of artistic expression among the universes covered in the film. Research with artistic and audiovisual creations that dialogued with graffiti led us to propose making a stop motion film with the 5 Zonas group. Stop motion is an animation technique that creates the illusion of movement through the montage of photographic frames. In the film created by Andre Farkas and Arthur Guttilla, the spray cans come to life along with the graffiti designs made by the members of 5 Zonas.

The work was made during graffiti and photography sessions over two consecutive days and edited by the two artists. In the films *From over on the East Side* and *Art and the Street*, we made use of this creative work, overlapping comments from people walking in the streets during the filming of the graffiti action with the animation.

A video clip with the RDM is the second experimental video from our project. In this case the experimentalism is less to do with language – since

the video clip in general is perhaps one of the most established forms of combining music and video – and more with process, the two documentary makers working as directors of a rap clip with minimal resources. But exploring minimal resources may also be an essential characteristic of a specific kind of experimental language.

Our solution to translating the lyrics to one of RDM's songs, 'Barro Branco' [White Mud], was the fictional construction of a street action, a song depicting precisely the area in which the group's members met, grew up together and where they still live today. The video was included in the medium length film *The Art of the Street*. Prior to this, it had been appropriated by the group itself and posted on YouTube with the title: "OFFICIAL BARRO BRANCO VIDEO CLIP."

As well as the baton camera filming and the experimental language, our work was strongly influenced by the traditions of observational and participative cinema. Prior to scripting the film, during our conversations with the groups before taking the camera to the field, we noticed that when they ceased speaking directly to us (the directors or film crew) and began to speak among themselves (still in our presence) the discourse and the quality of information were very different.

Observational cinema – whose clearest exponent is North American direct cinema, but which is developed in ethnographic cinema by a variety of authors and schools<sup>14</sup> – was a central reference point for our production, especially in terms of exploring what we define as the 'ethnography of groups,' which looked to describe the details of the action.

We set out from a year of work with interviews in the local area – as part of the mapping process – which makes this type of interaction and recording an equally important language in the construction of our ethnographic film. The choice of observational cinema resulted, therefore, from our pursuit of a narrative language that emphasized the artistic creation of our protagonists, a methodology that recorded the discourses permeating their everyday and organizational lives: the political discourse present in the musical

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14 Jean Rouch and his *cinéma-vérité* associated observational cinema with participative methodologies. David MacDougall can be considered as one of main producers of observational cinema in the field of anthropology. The Manchester School has formed generations of filmmakers focused on observational cinema. For discussions of the latter, see Nichols (2005), Da-Rin (2004), MacDougall (1995) and Barnow (1993), among others.

lyrics, the didactic and identity discourse in the talks of the street dance teacher to his classroom students, the relaxed, sentimental or energetic discourse in chats in the streets between friends – rather than the discourse produced *for* the camera.

It is worth noting, however, that observation, in our own filmmaking, is not intended to be neutral, distant and objective. It is the outcome of an intense relation with the social actors. Each filmed situation, whether public event or intimate scene, was to some extent discussed or scripted with the story's protagonists. Consequently in our film work, observation is not separated from participation. Through these moments of joint creation of situations, plots and narratives, we were able to approximate even more closely the Rouchian ideal of sharing through film.

The dialogue between one of the film's protagonists and his wife, a scene that was filmed for around 30 minutes, is highly significant. With very few people from the team in the room, the couple felt very at ease to *represent* their usual everyday relationship. The scene shows a wide range of the couple's pleasures and sadnesses, ranging from affection to outright quarrelling. Our camera, used at the moment in question by the film's director of photography, Rafael Nobre, is undoubtedly not a 'fly-on-the-wall' to use the terminology that defined the type of presence desired by the authors of direct cinema. In the room of around six square metres, the cinematographer, his tripod and the camera took up a considerable amount of space... So how should we understand the naturalness with which the couple discuss life and their relationship? Rouch argues that some truths can only be accessed through *fiction*. More than a simple observer, the camera is a provoker<sup>15</sup>. Perhaps we can surmise that it was precisely the camera's presence that generated the space and opportunity for the couple to "wash some dirty linen" in public.

Bill Nichols (2005) contrasts 'fly-on-the-wall' – observational cinema – with 'fly-in-the-soup' – provocative cinema. This is precisely what Jean Rouch does: he provokes by proposing performances for the film, exploring an approximation to reality through the creation of fictions, creating the drama being filmed in collaboration with his interlocutors.

One of his films, *Tourou et Bitti, Les tambours d'avant* (1967), is a long take

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<sup>15</sup> Jean Rouch's *cinéma-vérité* exerted considerable influence over a number of Brazilian directors of documentaries, among them Geraldo Sarno, Jorge Bodanzky, Eduardo Coutinho and João Moreira Salles. For more information on this topic, see the documentary *Jean Rouch Crossing Boundaries*, and Medeiros, 2010.



of around ten minutes, on a hunting ceremony and religious dance. Rouch films as he enters the ritual space, approaches the musicians playing the drums, waits until the trance occurs and then withdraws. Speaking about the film, Rouch recognizes the camera's provocative role:

There is a **very special relation between these people and the cinema**. They have a very clear notion that the things observed by the camera become especially prominent. **The camera therefore assumes an active role in the ceremony**. If by chance I make a mistake and transfer my attention to a participant before he deserves becoming the focus – that is, before he enters into trance – they protest: “No! You shouldn't be filming this now.” (ROUCH in AVELLAR, 2008, our emphasis).

The relation of the Cidade Tiradentes artists to the film was undoubtedly *special*. The camera plays an active role in arranging the actions and reflections. The camera is provocative, participative, observing and observed. We directed and were directed. Together we as a group, the team and the artists from the district, created the Cidade Tiradentes that appears in the films.

This relation is not always made explicit in the form in which film credits are traditionally presented. Can we speak of a script writer or director of the film? In a work of this kind, can we claim that the director deserves more credit for authorship than the local producer or even some of the work's protagonists? All those involved, the film crew, protagonists and editors, have an influence over the narrative construction and are therefore all authors of the work.

### In the editing suite

In *Film as Ethnography*, the book co-edited by himself and David Turton, Peter Crawford published an article with a suggestive title, “Film as discourse: the invention of anthropological realities”, in which he explores the differences and similarities between ethnographic writing and film, or between what he calls textual and cinematic anthropology (Crawford 1995: 66).

To understand the representational processes involved in anthropological film and text, Crawford examines the relation between ‘Othering – Becoming,’ or between presence and absence in the production of meanings. In the case of fieldwork, the anthropologist, he argues, is caught in a process

of 'becoming,' turning into an other and distancing herself from her own culture. But when writing the monograph, it is precisely this distance from the other that enables the process of reflection.

However it is precisely in this relation between presence and absence that he identifies a key difference between film and text. The text, the end result of the process of distancing, is explanatory, explicatory, 'othering.' Film, with its sensual capacities, communicates an understanding, expressing to the audience the meaning of becoming. For Crawford, film is 'presence,' the result of the image's insistence on 'being there.' Writing is 'absence,' a distance imposed between the self and the 'other.'

We could compare the film editing process to the moment of writing when a distance is imposed between researcher and subjects. But in the editing suite, this distancing is curiously marked by a new process of approximation. In the editing suite, the film editor<sup>16</sup> comes into close proximity with the filmed context for the first time. For the directors, who took part in the entire research and filming process, the editing suite is simultaneously distance and presence. The editing suite becomes a field.

The first step in this new field is to revisit all the filmed material. In our case, we have more than 10 hours filmed with the handycam by the film's protagonists or their families, as well as approximately 20 hours of film produced by our team (primarily the director of photography and her assistant).

Our first task was to make an initial selection of this material, reducing it to around five hours, in order for the actual editing work to begin. Simultaneously we constructed a pre-script for editing, setting out from the original idea and script for the film, telling the editor what story we wanted to tell.

The editing work began with the selected images and the script with which we provided her. Some days after the start of the work, during which time the editor was able to obtain a closer feel for the material and produce a few minutes of edited film, we met and watched the first draft. Although the material closely followed our script, the screening left us cold.

This moment of estrangement in relation to production of the

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16 When the film is not edited by the director/researcher him or herself, as in the case discussed here. After completing the filming, we worked with two different editors: Karine Binaux edited the short film *From over on the East Side* and Douglas Guedes the medium length *Art and the Street*. Both are credited for *Art and the Street* since the medium length film incorporates the entire short film in its structure.

ethnographic (filmic) text – written by various people in our case – prompted us to make an important decision: if the process of producing the entire film had until then been closely shared between filmmakers and filmed subjects, the editing process could be no different.

Karine Binaux is a Franco-Brazilian musician and editor. She could bring her knowledge, intuition, artistic sensibility and personal reading of the material to the editing suite; the editor's subjectivity would then acquire space in the project, making explicit the expansion of the notion of authorship already under way from the very outset of the research. Our desire as directors was to detach ourselves from the pre-established script and encourage our editor to pursue an initial free reading. The end result was surprising. The editor was no longer just a technician operating the editing equipment but also a co-author of the film. Her appropriation of the film's narrative meant that collective creation became more difficult in the editing suite, but also more sincere and interesting. Examining the material that we produced more freely (with the chance to propose new paths, including ones different from those initially conceived by the directors), the editor became more secure in relation to her own work, choosing the scenes she found to be more powerful and arguing for a montage that in a sense reflected her own view of the outskirts.

The experimentation with sharing the narrative creation of the film in the editing suite also became more interesting because of the chance we had to edit two films: shorter and longer versions based on the same material. The short film, *From over on the East Side*, edited by Karine Binaux, did not include Daniel Hylario, who would become the protagonist of the medium length version, *Art and the Street*. In the short film, a sequence of ethnographic scenes, including a lot of material filmed with the baton camera, produces a mosaic of fragments of everyday life in Cidade Tiradentes, seen through the experience of its young artists. Without Daniel's reflexive and guiding presence, the narrative of the short film is closer to the experience of life and art of the protagonists than an explanatory and intellectual discourse. At the outset we wondered whether the fragmentary nature of the resulting film was the outcome of the high degree of sharing involved in the work. Has the shared audiovisual production lost its unity and meaning? The work undoubtedly was very distant from the traditional language of the cinema. In any event this version was very well received in the ethnographic cinema

circuit and the more alternative and experimental film worlds. The film was selected to be shown in various competitions including ForumDocBH2011 in Belo Horizonte, at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Ethnographic Film Show in Rio de Janeiro, at the 13<sup>th</sup> Belo Horizonte International Festival of Short Films and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Recife Ethnographic Film Festival, among others.

The medium length version, *Art and the Street*, edited by Douglas Guedes using the short film as his starting point, is led by the narrator Daniel Hylario – a thinker from Cidade Tiradentes – whose own analytical perspective results in a film in which ideas and experience are shuffled. The opinions of the narrator (who speaks to the camera) compose a new layer of meanings, which overlaps with the experience of the film’s protagonist artists. In contrast to the short version, where everyday scenes presented urban issues without naming or conceptualizing the problems, demanding greater participation from the spectator, the medium version of the film presents the film’s problematics more explicitly.

The film *Art and the Street* was undoubtedly better received by the public. Even today we wonder whether the film’s greater impact resulted from Daniel’s strength and charisma or from its ‘easier’ language and the inclusion of more artistic scenes.

Karine Binaux opted not to include scenes from the video clip or other ones suggested by the directors to give “the film room to breathe.” In Karine’s view, “if my protagonists have no time to breath in their everyday life, why am I going to let the spectator breath?” The interpretation of the Franco-Brazilian editor concerning the reality of the outskirts was largely negative, marked by the idea of a violent and deprived social space. Her editing reflects her social concern. Douglas Guedes, the editor of the shorter version, saw lightness and joy in the everyday artistic practices of the artists from Cidade Tiradentes, and was not opposed to including the “breathing space scenes,” those that resulted from the artistic experimentations produced by the team with the protagonists.

The editing suite does not just involve the relationship between directors and editors. There were long discussions with the musicians responsible for the sound tracks to both films. We perceived how different perceptions of the filmed material resulted in equally diverse musical interpretations, which imprinted feelings on the images, tinting the film with its own tonalities,

or distinct *modes*, to continue the musical metaphor. We also gave complete freedom to the artist responsible for the short film's musical score. Thomas Rohrer composed a dense sound track for *From over on the East Side*, which highlighted even more moments of tension in the day-to-day activities of our protagonists. Analyzing the short film screenings, we hypothesized that the sound track and editing reinforced tense and claustrophobic aspects of periphery experience, and that the sombre tonality reflected the perspective of artists of European origin on this outlying urban area in Brazil. For the medium length film we decided to take a more active role in the creation of the sound track, sharing our wishes and interpretations with João Paulo Nascimento and Tiago Frúgoli, the authors of the music for *Art and the Street*.

Crawford argues that transforming anthropology into a story-telling activity is a prerequisite for enabling anthropology to deal with dialogical, heteroglossic and polyphonic aspects of its encounter with the 'other.'

The film is undoubtedly an exercise in story-telling. The stories are recounted at various moments. In the field they are told by the actors themselves (a discussion of the dramatic potential of the ethnography is a topic for another paper). In the editing suite, story-telling is the outcome of careful choices: which story do you want to tell? What is important to you? – our editors asked us. How should the story be told? How can the viewer be placed in contact with the rich experience we experienced in the field? These were our questions, which gradually received answers in the editing suite.

It is worth noting one final difference identified by Crawford between film and writing. The author reminds us that in traditional field research, the raw material is the data in the form of words contained in the researcher's notebook. At this stage, meaning is established through textualization, the anthropologist is the person responsible for codifying the final product (the book or article). In film the raw material is not the words inscribed by the ethnographer but the declarations (words, gestures and actions) of the subjects in the field, recorded on film, magnetic tape or memory cards (in our case).

In Crawford's view the fundamental difference between the ethnographic writing process (data – textualization – text) and the film process (shot – editing – film) explains why the 'authority' (or verisimilitude) of ethnographic writing rests exclusively with the anthropologist. He or she is responsible for codifying the final product – the book or article – while the raw material is not codified. In filmmaking, the raw material is already highly codified. And,

as we have aimed to show here, the authorship of even the rawest material is already widely shared.

## On the air

The public screening is the moment when the experience of film production becomes concrete. The viewer completes the meaning of the work. It is not the script writer or film director who is responsible for the definitive, original and most truthful view of their work. On the air, the film is now part of the world, open to reinterpretations, refutations and resignifications.

*From over on the East Side* (2010) and *Art and the Street* (2011) were shown various times. *From over on the East Side* was broadcast by TV Brasil on two occasions in 2011<sup>17</sup> and was selected for various festivals, such as the 15<sup>th</sup> International Ethnographic Film Exhibition, ForumDocBh 2011, SP Leste em Movimento, the 13<sup>th</sup> Belo Horizonte International Short Film Festival, the 3rd Recife Ethnographic Film Festival, and various Etnodoc screenings (Rio de Janeiro, Manaus, Paraty) among others. It has also been shown in lectures, seminars and even classrooms by the film's directors and also by lecturers and teachers who have shown it to their students. Sometimes we receive feedback about these screenings.

At the end of 2011 we organized two encounters for launching and debating the documentary *Art and the Street*, one held in the centre of São Paulo (Matilha Cultural) and the other in the city outskirts (the Pombas Urbanas Institute in Cidade Tiradentes). We invited representatives from the public and private sectors, academics, cultural producers, local artists and protagonists from the film in order to ensure many different views of the work, while also imagining that these encounters would provoke a number of tensions between the different points of view, which we were keen to discover.

We discuss these debates in another article,<sup>18</sup> but we would like to highlight here some of the aspects that caught our attention. At the Matilha Cultural film club, one of the debaters was Gil Marçal, coordinator of the VAI Program (Program for Promoting Cultural Initiatives), which supports artistic-cultural activities, especially among young people with low incomes from

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17 The screening was planned as part of the Etnodoc competition in which the film took part.

18 Caffé & Hikiji, 2012a.

regions of the municipality lacking in resources and cultural equipment. Gil emphasized the film's dialogue with new forms of communication, like those used by young people to produce their own media.

The political dimension of communication in the digital era is indeed a starting point and end point of our projects. After the mapping project, we reflected on the various alternative spaces for producing and transmitting audiovisual products. The ethnographic film itself proposes to be one of these spaces, as we have tried to show here. Other spaces were created in the development of the mapping project, such as the Rede de Artistas de Cidade Tiradentes (Cidade Tiradentes Artists Network), which united a group of artists living in the region who met once a month throughout the period of the project to debate the main challenges faced by cultural production in the neighbourhood, write letters with demands to the public authorities, organize collaborative productions in public spaces, deepen knowledge and strengthen local culture. The network played a pioneering role in the debate on the solidary economy of culture;<sup>19</sup> it created the Rua + Cultura (Street + Culture) event – which relied principally on the work and equipment of the artists themselves and local traders (a *collaborative production* with minimal support from the sub-prefecture) and that aimed to complement Law N 12.264 on street recreation (Ruas de Lazer).

The appropriation of the film as a language by the protagonists themselves was one of topics highlighted in the launch debates. In Cidade Tiradentes, during the debate at the Pombas Urbanas Institute, the anthropologist and professor of the School of Communications and Arts of the Universidade de São Paulo (ECA-USP), Esther Hamburger, drew attention precisely to the framings and locations sought out by our main protagonist when the camera was in his hands. Daniel replied by emphasizing that the locations used both in recording the video clip for the song 'Barro Branco' (included in the film *Art and the Street*) and in the documentary were studied in order to ensure that the neighbourhood would be easier to recognize. Daniel's comments revealed his concern with the entire research process for the mapping work and the documentary: how should the region be presented and how could they avoid exacerbating the existing stigma and yet simultaneously highlight the everyday problems of Cidade Tiradentes?

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19 See the video on the artists network at [http://youtu.be/\\_CUfCmCQZtk](http://youtu.be/_CUfCmCQZtk)



In the debate at the Matilha Cultural, the anthropologist and USP professor Heitor Frúgoli summarizes as follows his perception of Cidade Tiradentes through the narrator Daniel:

“Through the variety of perspectives, the character Daniel seems able to synthesize the apprehensions that traverse these dialogues, with a significant capital of concepts (sociability, equality, individuality, prosperity, etc.) that in the end becomes highly utopic in terms of imagining what it would be to “colour all the pain,” while he wanders through spaces crisscrossed only by rough paths, which symbolize a boundary of urbanization, but also a space for a possible new beginning, marked by new more human codes of relations where everyone is (once more) together through free choice.”

Finally it is worth including Cidade Tiradentes artist Paniquinho’s provocative comments that he made during the debate at Pombas Urbanas:

“I don’t much like this word ‘study object’... I am an active part of this story. I watch the video and imagine what this video would be like without Daniel’s narration throughout the entire film... Narrating everything and tying together everyone’s dialogues. Perhaps the biggest theory, the biggest theoretician within the university space, would be unable to translate these in such an interesting form. But why is that? Because he has the experience, he has the knowledge, he knows the district, he manages to understand this transformation.”

At various moments we have elaborated our knowledge project, which diverges fairly significantly from those that take as ‘study objects’ the subjects with whom knowledge is produced. From the mapping project onwards, the possibility of shared production of knowledge was an underlying premise of our research.

However Paniquinho’s provocation was a burst of noise in this process. Although film’s potential as a means of presenting subjects from their own perspectives seemed clear to us, doubts still remained over the place of enunciation.

Here we have sought to highlight the innumerable possibilities for sharing that emerged from the mapping work to the film: the collective elaboration of questions and concepts, shared creative processes for the development of scripts, handycam recordings and collaborations between team and

artists in the fabrication of experimental films (such as video clips and stop motion films), processes that are open to editing and montage.

The readings made by our interlocutors at the time of screening the film reveal that each protagonist of the film proposes a variety of reflexive and sensible paths. The artists are the authors of a mosaic, assembled by various people.

This assemblage, which makes the film an example of shared anthropology, results in material with very little 'retouching,' accepting the impurities in the recording of the images and sound, and valorising the roughness and wrinkles of daily life. This kind of visual anthropological work gambles on the audience, the viewer's own creativity, the attribution of new meanings to what is being shown. The images that we produced were intended for patient and curious viewers willing to engage in and with reflexive work.

Ethnographic visual production works with 'social actors' rather than professionals and takes as its setting the unpredictable and risky environment of life itself. It therefore amounts to a process founded on uncertainty, imprecision, resistance and residues. The outcome of this kind of work may often be considered inappropriate for presentation to the wider public through mainstream forms of mass communication like radio, cinema and television, or even for teaching purposes. The result is guided by an investigative time and objective that frequently do not correspond to the techniques used by mass communication, art or education.

Photography that favours content over technical qualities, paying attention to the margins of what seems to be in focus in any scene, an emphasis on duration, on long takes, the search for the sensation of enclosure in a frame that reproduces the small space of a room, details, 'dirty and noisy' images, fragmentation, barely comprehensible dialogues between 'strange' subjects are recurrent characteristics of visual anthropological production. In our films we have sought to accentuate these characteristics rather than search for a cleaner aesthetic more accessible to viewers used to the televisual formats of multinational documentaries and telejournalism.

In this article we have highlighted how the processes of researching and making audiovisual and hypermedia products can be compared to the significant recent experimentations with homemade videos (enabled by electronic gadgets and spread on networks like YouTube and Facebook) and how these new audiovisual experiences and narrative discoveries, increasingly

popularized and explored, introduce new questions and challenges into the field of visual anthropology, especially in terms of the possibilities for the collaborative production and sharing of knowledge.

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