Fig. 18 Filming Protest

6. Making Videos

Presenting a Close-Up of Video Activism

After laying out the conceptual and methodological framing of the research (Chapters Two and Three), and providing an introduction to the contextual conditions (Chapter Four) as well as the key actors involved in audiovisual production (Chapter Five) in Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro, the next three chapters turn to a close reading of video activist practices. The guiding question is how audiovisuals documenting protests and police violence are produced, disseminated, and discussed.

To structure this analysis, Chapter Six begins with a detailed examination of the process of recording videos in the streets. As the analysis will show, three distinct types of videos can be identified – journalist, witness, and activist videos. Despite overlaps, each type is associated with a specific group of actors and distinct recording practices. However, video production is only one part of the process of using audiovisuals to draw attention to protests and police violence; the second key element is dissemination. Chapter Seven therefore explores the emerging topographies of visibility as videos circulate online. It examines the factors that determine a video's popularity, the role of traditional and new gatekeepers, and the strategies and tactics used to circumvent manipulation and censorship.

Finally, Chapter Eight focuses on violence as an initiator, process, and outcome within a politics of encounter that challenges hegemonic forms of exclusion and racism. Narratives of violence are frequently used to delegitimize urban movements – an approach countered by bottom-up video productions that document police violence against

protesters. As this chapter shows, audiovisual documentation, as a new practice of evidencing (lethal) violence, can play a critical role in exposing the racialized, everyday oppression faced by marginalized urban citizens. Throughout these chapters, individual videos are analyzed in depth to illustrate the fine-grained mechanics at play in bottom-up video making.

A typology of Video Production on the Ground

Making videos involves a range of practices, including selecting a recording device, choosing a filming position, handling the camera, editing audiovisual material, and disseminating the final product. This chapter analyzes different forms of video production on the ›streets‹ by examining the actors involved, their recording practices, and their relationship to the urban movements they represent.

Based on my analysis of the research material, I developed a heuristic typology that distinguishes between three types of videos: journalist videos, witness videos, and activist videos. Each type is defined by the videographer's relationship to the events they depict. I argue that journalist videos are typically produced by professional outsiders; activist videos by engaged insiders; and witness videos by unpredictable spectators. These subject positions directly shape how protests and police violence are represented.

For example, journalist videos are often filmed from behind police lines – literally from outside the protest – and are expected to meet higher standards of audiovisual quality, editing, and narrative coherence. As a result, they frequently reproduce narratives by police and authorities, often culminating in portrayals of protesters as violent.

This chapter begins by examining journalist videos, followed by witness and activist video production. The final section compares these three types of video making in terms of their accessibility for bottom-up production and their emancipatory potential. The capacity for self-representation – an autogestion in audiovisual representation – varies significantly depending on the economic, social, and cultural resources that urban movements are able to mobilize.

6.1 Journalists Videos – Reporting behind Police Lines

As discussed in Chapter Five, the media landscapes in Brazil and South Africa differ significantly. To illustrate these differences, this section analyzes how protests are depicted in journalist-produced videos. The examples

discussed here – all uploaded to YouTube[1] – have been selected to highlight key characteristics of journalist video production in both cities.

The analysis begins with a video by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) covering a service delivery protest in Cape Town, followed by a report from News24 on a protest in Hout Bay. It then turns to Brazilian examples, including a Globo news segment on a protest in Rio de Janeiro and a video by TV Bandeirantes documenting a fatal incident during a demonstration. These examples serve to illustrate how journalist videos are typically produced from behind police lines, how they frame protesters and police, and how they contribute to dominant narratives about urban unrest.

Journalist videos framing Service Delivery Protests in Cape Town's Center

»We want a land that is very closer to town.«[2]

On 30 October 2013, thousands of residents from the Cape Flats marched into Cape Town's Central Business District to make their voices heard. Their destination was the Western Cape Provincial Parliament. »We are marching to demand land for housing development, decent sanitation and negotiated bus rapid transport and Cape Town integrated rapid transit system processes,« read an SMS sent by protest organizers to media outlets.[3] »We want Zille [premier of the Western Cape provincial government] to give us land and houses. I have five children to feed,« explained Celine Mtyingaza, a resident of Khayelitsha. »We have no electricity and we cannot survive any longer.«[4]

In the media, Andile Lili was presented as a central figure behind the protest.[5] Lili, a controversial leader of the Ses'khona People's Rights

1 I do not differentiate between journalist videos according by the user who uploaded content social media platforms. In Brazil, major news outlets have typically developed their own platforms for disseminating their content online, such as Globo's Globo Play (Globo, »Globo Play.«). In South Africa, the public broadcaster, the SABC, generally disseminates its content on its SABC Digital News YouTube channel (SABC Digital News, »YouTube Channel.«), while privately owned media houses such as Eyewitness News also operate their own social media channels.

2 Andile Lili in Vid. 13, SABC, Service delivery protest 0:46

3 Davis, »The Man behind Cape Town's Poo Protests – but Who Does Andile Lili Represent?«

4 Davis, »The Man behind Cape Town's Poo Protests.«

5 Andile Lili, the co-founder of the Ses'khona People's Rights Movement and an ANC ward councilor in the City of Cape Town Council has been a

Movement, had previously been involved in Cape Town's so-called »poo protests,« which aimed to draw attention to land evictions and the living conditions of marginalized urban residents.[6] However, the protest was widely interpreted through the lens of party politics, with accusations that the ANC was using service delivery protests to destabilize the DA-led Western Cape government. In response to this framing, the Mail & Guardian countered: »It's not about politics but delivery.«[7]

On the day of the protest, three videos were uploaded to YouTube documenting the event. This section focuses on two journalist videos – one published by SABC Digital News, the public broadcaster's YouTube channel, and the other by the privately owned digital news network News24.[8] The third video, which is called »Looting after Cape Town protest«,[9] was uploaded by a private user, will be discussed later.

The first video, titled »Service delivery protest in Cape Town degenerated into thievery and looting,«[10] was published by SABC. The second, »Cape Town protests turn violent,« was released by News24.[11] Both videos are under two minutes long. The SABC video includes a voice-over, while the News24 clip offers no contextual narration. The SABC footage shows broken shop windows, an interview with a woman expressing outrage at the destruction, and scenes of »angry residents gathered outside the provincial legislature.«[12] The report then cuts to Andile Lili reading a list of demands:

> »Our communities are saying: we want a land that is very closer to town, so that our people have access to housing and development, so

controversial figure (Fisher, »ANC Official Faces Charges for Inciting Violence.«).

6 Lili also proposed using the land of the Mowbray Golf Club to build 100,000 much-needed houses. The incongruity of having golf courses for affluent citizens only a few kilometers away from an area where state authorities regularly destroy informal housing epitomizes some of the contradictions inherent to Cape Town's segregated urban structure. See: Davis, »The Man behind Cape Town's Poo Protests«; Lali, »Ward Councillor Andile Lili Calls for Residents to Rebuild Demolished Shacks.«; Sesant, »ANC Is ›Addressing‹ Ses'khona Movement's Demands for Land, Jobs.«

7 Mail & Guardian Staff Reporter, »Cape Town Protesters: It's Not About Politics but Delivery.«

8 The reference here is to the YouTube video, which was not only uploaded on the channel's YouTube page but also shown on SABC Television.

9 Vid. 15, Buchanan, Looting after Cape Town protest

10 Vid. 13, SABC, Service delivery protest.

11 Vid. 14, News24, Cape Town protests turn violent

12 Vid. 13, SABC, Service delivery protest 0:30-0:37.

Fig. 19 We Want Land

that our people have access to the economy of the City of Cape Town. That is all that our people are looking for.«[13]

Lili's statement is juxtaposed with an interview with Zakhele Mbhele, a provincial government spokesperson, who argues that the government cannot consider the protesters' demands until they return with a more »detailed memorandum« specifying »their request for land and other amenities.«[14]

In the News24 video, three bystanders are interviewed. The first says, »I don't know what they [the protesters] want,« adding, »they came to strike, not to steal.«[15] The second expresses outrage, suggesting the protesters should be »minding their own business« rather than coming to the city center to »loot.«[16] The third laments that his »normal day at the mall« was disrupted by the protest.[17] These interviews are interspersed with short clips of the demonstration.

Both videos convey the impression of a chaotic, out-of-control mob. Their sensationalist focus on violence and looting in the city center leaves little room for exploring the protest's underlying causes of neglect in the urban peripheries. As a result, although the march succeeded in bringing the demands of marginalized residents from the periphery into the city center, the protesters were unable to shape how their actions were portrayed. Instead, the emotionally charged coverage left

13 Andile Lili in Vid. 13, SABC, Service delivery protest 0:46
14 Vid. 13, SABC, Service delivery protest 1:25-1:35
15 Vid. 14, News24, Cape Town protests turn violent 0:10-0:14
16 Vid. 14, News24, Cape Town protests turn violent 0:23-0:28
17 Vid. 14, News24, Cape Town protests turn violent 0:32-0:36

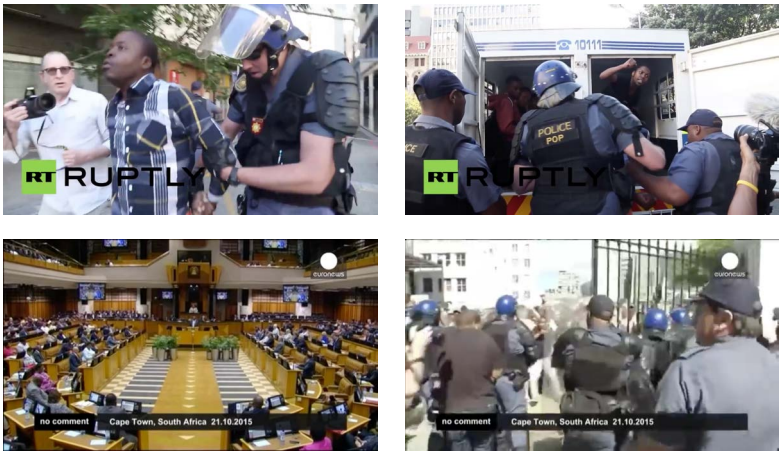

Fig. 20 Fees Must Fall

viewers with the impression of disorder and threat, reinforcing dominant narratives uncontrolled crowds imperiling the order and safety of central Cape Town.

Depicting Rhodes Must Fall Protests

»For our rights, for our rights, for our rights!«[18]

Two years later, on 21 October 2015, students from the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) organized a protest march to the national Houses of Parliament in Cape Town. The demonstration was part of a national mobilization against tuition fee increases, marking what Abdul Kayum Ahmed (as discussed in the previous chapter) describes as the third moment of mobilization: the transformation of Rhodes Must Fall into the broader Fees Must Fall movement.[19]

While protesters gathered outside, inside the National Assembly, Minister of Finance Nhlanhla Nene was delivering his annual Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, which included the proposed tuition fee increases. Members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the third-largest party in Parliament, interrupted Nene's speech by chanting »Fees Must Fall.« They were subsequently removed by parliamentary

18 Student being arrested in: Vid. 16, trouble media, student protests
19 Ahmed, »The Rise of Fallism.«

security and banned from the session. Outside, student protesters broke through the gates in front of the legislature.

Three journalist-produced videos offer insight into how this protest was represented. The first is a live broadcast by SABC, recorded before the clashes began.[20] Reporter Nomawethu Solwandle stands in front of a cordoned-off area where students are singing in protest. While Solwandle explains that »students are saying no« to the proposed fee increases and outlines the conflict between student demands and government policy, other videographers can be seen filming the protest in the background.[21]

The second video, published by Euronews' No Comment TV,[22] begins with a short clip of Nene's speech and its interruption by EFF MPs. It then cuts to a reporter standing in front of a crowd, breathlessly describing the clashes between police and students at the gates before retreating behind the police line. As objects are thrown by protesters, the reporter says, »I ask my cameraman, Neil, to maybe move a bit back here.«[23] The final images – after a cut indicating a change of location – show police officers lined up to secure the street. The reporter and the unseen cameraman guide the viewer through the unfolding events. The editing constructs a narrative of escalating confrontation.[24]

The third video, produced by Ruptly TV,[25] is a montage of edited footage focusing on the arrest of student protesters, as reflected in its title: »South Africa: Multiple arrests as student protesters swamp Cape Town.«[26] The video shows protesters being chased by riot police and at least four arrests. In one striking moment, a young woman walks among police officers in riot gear, shouting into the camera: »Apartheid round two, welcome!« before spreading her arms wide in an inviting gesture.[27]

These videos present the students as subjects with a voice and a cause. The presence of other videographers filming the protest underscores the heightened attention the event received – particularly from international media outlets like Euronews and Ruptly. The student march to

20 Vid. 17, SABC, Students protest outside parliament

21 Vid. 17, SABC, Students protest outside parliament 1:14

22 Euronews was founded in France in 1993 with the mission of developing a pan-European news network. The Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris has owned a majority stake in Media Globe Networks, Euronews' majority shareholder, since 2015. Vid. 18, No Comment TV, Tear gas fired

23 Vid. 18, No Comment TV, Tear gas fired 1:46-1:48.

24 Vid. 18, No Comment TV, Tear gas fired

25 Ruptly TV belongs to the RT network, which is funded by the Russian state and has consequently often been criticized by ›Western‹ media for its supposed bias.

26 Vid. 19, Ruptly, Mutliple arrests

27 Vid. 19, Ruptly, Mutliple arrests 1:14-1:17.

Parliament was broadcast live by both national and international media.[28] The protesters' demands were articulated, and the repression they faced was documented through footage of arrests.

This coverage stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of the 2013 service delivery protest. Overall, the depiction of the student protests appears more sympathetic and nuanced. While the service delivery protest was framed as chaotic and threatening, the student movement was presented as politically engaged and articulate, with its grievances taken seriously by the media – even though the clashes between protesters and police were significantly more violent. The differential treatment of urban movements in Cape Town is particularly striking when contrasted with the wholesale rejection of protests in journalist videos from Brazil, as the next section will show.

Rio de Janeiro, 17 June 2013: The Storm on the Legislative Assembly

When protesters briefly occupied the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro (ALERJ) on 17 June 2013, it felt like a symbolic victory for them – a reclaiming of a center of political power by the people.[29] One activist described the moment as cathartic: »Above all I felt that this movement was a cathartic expression of a massive dissatisfaction.«[30] The occupation of ALERJ transcended a simple demand for policy change; it was a collective assertion of presence in the heart of Rio's political establishment.

That Monday marked the third day of the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup, just one day after Rio had hosted its opening match. A massive protest of approximately 150,000 people marched down Avenida Rio Branco, culminating in a violent confrontation at ALERJ. According to Jornal A Nova Democracia, the site had »functioned as a refuge for the biggest protests in Rio de Janeiro over the course of 50 years of mass struggle.«[31] When protesters clashed with the Polícia Militar, a street

28 In the videos from the student march in 2015 numerous scenes depict videographers filming in the background, which does not appear in any of the impressions from the Service Delivery Protest in 2013. A difference that is cannot only be attributed to the attention raised, but equally to the increased prevalence of practices to film protest that grew significantly between 2013 and 2015.

29 Int. 1, Activist, Rio de Janeiro, 16 September 2015.

30 »mais do que tudo eu sentia que era um movimento de catarse de expressão de uma insatisfação muito grande» (Int. 1, Activist, Rio de Janeiro, 16 September 2015).

31 Vid. 08, AND, Veja com exclusividade.

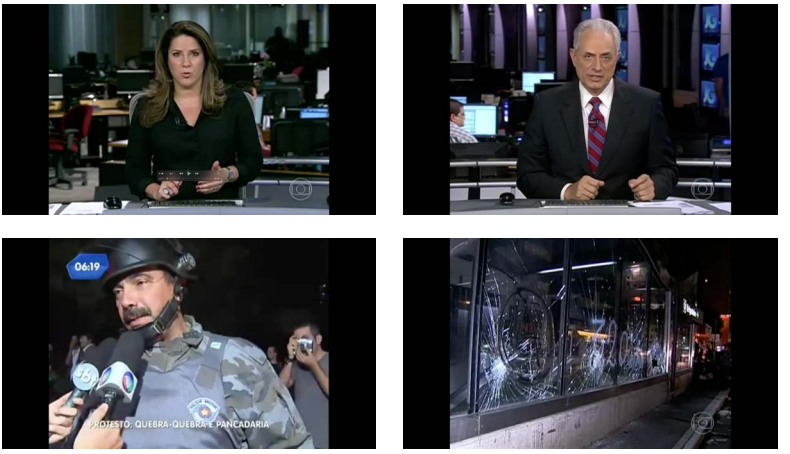

Fig. 21 Globo and Vandalism

battle erupted that the newspaper described as »[a]s rarely seen in the history of the country« [32]:

> »A rain of rocks, sticks, mortars and Molotov cocktails forced the troops of repression to retreat. The PMs [military police] remained inside the building for hours, surrounded by the fury of thousands of people in struggle, not only against the increase of public transport fees, but against all the famine and oppression imposed on the masses by the ruling classes and by imperialism.«
>
> »To rebel is just.«[33]

A live broadcast by GloboNews offers insight into how Brazil's most influential news network covered the events.[34] The footage combines aerial shots from a helicopter with ground-level images in front of ALERJ, narrated by a studio anchor in conversation with commentators. While

32 Vid. 08, AND, Veja com exclusividade.

33 »Uma chuva de pedras, paus, morteiros e coquetéis molotov forçou as tropas de repressão a recuarem. Os PMs permaneceram por horas no interior do prédio cercado pela fúria de milhares de pessoas em luta, não apenas contra o aumento das passagens, mas contra toda a carestia e a opressão imposta pelas classes dominantes e pelo imperialismo às massas. Rebelar-se é justo.« Vid. 08, AND, Veja com exclusividade

34 The video was uploaded by MrMrPreta, a user who has uploaded significant amounts of GloboNews footage of protests (Vid. 09, Globo, Manifestação contra aumento).The fact that this video has received very few views on YouTube is not particularly relevant here, since Globo typically runs in bars throughout the city and the country and it is safe to assume that the program was watched in television all over the country.

protest scenes unfold on screen, the studio guests repeatedly emphasize the distinction between »peaceful« and »violent« protesters and discuss ALERJ's symbolic importance. The broadcast then cuts to a reporter on the ground: »I am just in front of ALERJ. It is a scene of war […] there is destruction […] complete disorder.«[35] The live report leaves viewers with an impression of chaos and devastation – »scenes of war« captured from above and narrated by a journalist adopting the tone of a war correspondent.[36]

This framing is emblematic of Brazilian mainstream media's coverage of the Jornadas de Junho, which overwhelmingly portrayed the protests as dangerous and anarchic. A mash-up video circulating online captures this discourse of delegitimization.[37] It features rapid-fire clips of prominent news anchors, then-president Dilma Rousseff, and various citizens repeating the same refrain: »vandalism.« The video highlights the repetition of terms used by corporate media to describe the protests: »vandalism,« »vandals,« »destruction,« »violence,« »terrorism,« »chaos,« and »rebels without a cause.«[38] The audiovisual loop underscores the dominant narrative in Brazilian media, which pathologized and criminalized the movement. As Theodossopoulos argues, such discourses serve to delegitimize social movements by framing them as irrational or dangerous.[39]

The mash-up video ends with a reminder of journalistic ethics, quoting Article 1 of the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists: »The respect for the truth and for the right to truth for the public is the first obligation of a journalist.«[40] In Brazil, many activists have accused Globo of violating this principle and have regularly expelled its reporters from protest marches. One such instance, which I personally observed on the ground, illustrates how deeply this mistrust runs.

35 »Eu sou exatamente em frente ALERJ. É um placo da guerra [...] um nova quebra-quebra [...] uma completa desordem«. Vid. 09, Globo, Manifestação contra aumento

36 For a critical discussion of the Brazilian corporate media's representation of protests and politics, see e.g. an edition of *The Listening Post*, Al Jazeera English's media analysis show, from September 2017: AlJazeera English, *»Brazil: Media, Monopolies and Political Manipulations«, The Listening Post.*

37 The video »vandalismo, vandalismo, vandalismo…« is 4-minutes-25-seconds long and has gathered an impressive 180.000 viewers since its upload by the user MarcosJacksonCarvalh. Vid. 11, Marcos, Vandalismo

38 Vid. 11, Marcos, Vandalismo

39 Theodossopoulos, »On De-Pathologizing Resistance.«

40 The declaration was signed in 1954 in Bordeaux – also known as the Bordeaux Declaration – and constitutes basic principles. The last update of the Declaration took place in Tunis in 2019 (International Federation of Journalists, »Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists«).

Positioning to decry vandalism

One such incident occurred on 16 November 2015 during a protest against the mining company Vale, held in response to the catastrophic collapse of a river dam.[41] On that day, I had the opportunity to film and photograph the protest preparations from inside as well as from the eleventh floor of a nearby high-rise.[42] The resulting image offers a bird's-eye view of the scene.

Figure 22 shows the marked photo, which allows for a spatial analysis of how the protest set-up and the position of the Globo camera crew. In the yellow circle, protesters gathering for the march are visible. The blue rectangle marks a group of activists preparing a performance using a cloth covered in dirt and mud to symbolize the pollution of the Rio Doce. The red circle within the yellow one shows video activists filming the event,[43] while another red circle in the lower right corner marks the Globo camera crew. The Globo journalists first remained at a distance.

Fig. 22 Bird's Eye View of Protest Preparations

41 The breaking of the dam at the Mariana mining site was one of the biggest disasters in the destruction of the environment in Brazil. Over 12 people have died when the dam broke, and hundreds of kilometers of the river were polluted with highly toxic iron ore. The disaster may have been prevented by the owners of the Smarco – Vale and BHP Billiton (Phillips, »Brazil's Mining Tragedy: Was It a Preventable Disaster?«). Three year's later the Brumadinho disaster – a facility equally owned by Vale – happened in which 270 people were killed.

42 The building housed a publicly accessible library with a direct view on the gathering of the protest. This presented me with the rare opportunity to photograph and film a protest march from an entirely different perspective.

43 For example, Vid. 12, MIC, Manifestantes fazem escracho

Fig. 23 Globo Reporter at »Vale Nada« Protest

When the protest march started and reached the headquarters of Vale, the Globo journalists attempted to enter the crowd to film. Upon being recognized, they were surrounded by demonstrators shouting »get out-!«[44] and were eventually escorted away by private security – smeared with dirt on their faces.[45]

This expulsion of Globo journalists in 2015 did not occur in a vacuum. It came two years after the Jornadas de Junho had swept through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. The biased journalism during the 2013 protests – described above – had severely damaged public trust in corporate media. By 2015, the positioning of corporate journalists outside of protest crowds was no longer merely voluntary; it was increasingly enforced by the animosity they faced from activists. This hostility stood in stark contrast to the treatment Globo received when covering the »Fora Dilma« protests, organized by the conservative group »Vem Pra Rua« and supported by elite donors, conservatives, and right wing politicians.

44 Recording during the protest my personal archive contains videos – IMG_0810.m4v and IMG_0811.m4v – and photos from the expulsion of the journalists. See also Vid. 12, MIC, Manifestantes fazem escracho 2:18 – 2:28.

45 The historical Barão de Mauá Building was designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer and has been the seat of the Vale corporation until 2017.

Professional Outsiders Producing Videos from Behind Police Lines

In my proposition of the heuristic typology journalist videos are characterized by being produced by professional outsiders. Often presenting protests from a distance with relatively little empathy for the grievances of protesters – especially when protesters are marginalized urban citizens – journalist videos tend to identify and re-iterate perspectives of police, which are presented as ›objective‹ sources and not as party to the conflict.

Interviews with government officials figure prominently in journalist videos, as do interviews with eyewitnesses. Interviews with protesters are less common in journalist videos, especially in Brazil.[46] While often repeating the ›official‹ government narrative, journalist videos typically depict protests as acts of violence and destruction. In the Brazilian context in particular, social movements and their concerns are thereby »reduced« and »simplified« at the same time as activists are portrayed as »vandals« and »extremists«.[47] The exception to this in Brazil has been the reporting on Fora Dilma! protests. However, it needs be emphasized that as a type, numerous individual exceptions of remarkable journalists who work as engaged reporters are not fairly represented in the generalized claim. Especially, in South Africa media organizations such as GroundUp, Eyewitness News or the Chronicle,[48] have succeeded in establishing themselves in the Cape Town media landscape and balance biased reporting to some degree. Overall, the media representation of social movements in Cape Town still appears to depend on the movements' resources and connections.

Journalists are occasionally unable or reluctant to cross-check the ready-made narratives presented by the police and governing authorities against the accounts of individual protesters or activist organizations. Social distance presents a particular hurdle for reporters when it comes to finding potential interview partners, especially in the case of protests that happen in marginalized urban settings such as on the Cape Flats or in the favelas. In Brazil, activists' typically strong distrust of journalists makes capturing protesters' views even more difficult,[49] as

46 A major exception to this rule of thumb in Brazil was the portrayal of the 2015 and 2016 demonstrations that led to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, where Globo was supporting the protesters.

47 Int. 1, Activist, Rio de Janeiro, 16 September 2015.

48 Chronicle, »Website.«

49 There are several exceptions to this general claim. For example, one member of the Papo Reto collective still works at Globo (Int. 38, Researcher, Rio de Janeiro, 8 September 2016). In contrast, one of my interviewees explained to me how she had left her job as a photographer at Globo (Int. 37, Video

regularly demonstrated by the expulsion of Globo journalists from protest marches in Rio.

Journalists intentionally seek out noteworthy events, which they cover with well-equipped camera and production teams. Whether live coverage or edited news reports, their footage is usually of high audio-visuals quality. The techniques used in journalist videos adhere to defined news production standards and narrative structures. Video reports are usually between two to five minutes in length. Viewers are often guided by a narrator who presents a coherent news story. Cuts are often short – occurring every two to five seconds – to keep the attention of the audience. Videos are distributed via TV channels, the websites of media companies and their social media accounts. In contrast to witness and activist videos, journalist videos require the authorization of editors further up the internal hierarchy of media organizations, who may have no choice but to bear in mind the interests of sponsors, shareholders and funders when deciding whether to broadcast a particular report.

Consequently, the typology presents journalists as detached from the events which they cover.[50] This professional detachment is reinforced by a journalistic codex that demands impartial and objective reporting. In practice, however, this ideal often amounts to ›perpetuating the status quo‹ through the repetition of middle- and upper-class perspectives. Moreover, the economic pressures being experienced within the media industry supports sensationalized reporting that attracts maximum attention and, with it, maximum revenue.

Most journalist videos take the side of the state and the police in opposing activists – particularly in Brazil – and are often critical of or openly hostile towards the protests that they depict. The role of journalists as *professional outsiders* is reflected in their physical positioning: journalist videos of protests typically zoom in on the demonstrating crowd from afar – sometimes even from a helicopter – in a manner which can be characterized as symbolic of how journalist videos speak *about* rather than *with* protesters.

Especially in Rio de Janeiro, the conflicts between activists and journalists became a driving force to develop audio-visual and counter-hegemonic

Activist, Rio de Janeiro, 2 September 2016), as had many other media activists who had previously worked in the media industry.

50 As one interviewee who was studying at one of the most prestigious film and journalism schools in Johannesburg, said: the director of the same school strongly advised against filming protests because they can »easily get out of hand« and turn violent, »which is dangerous«. This warning expressed by the Dean of the film school represents the generalized skepticism towards marginalized urban citizens that is institutionally reinforced in at least some journalist education institutions (Int. 24, Journalist Student, Johannesburg, 8 August 2016).

representation ›from within‹. The representation of protests in corporate media and in particular by Globo infuriated people. In the end, this inspired urban movements and urban citizens to take filming into their own hands and start producing activist videos.

6.2 Witness Videos – The Explosion of Audio-Visual Documentation

> »Anywhere, where something is happening in the world, there is a cellphone. Almost everywhere, there is 3G, so you can upload it immediately...«[51]

Witness videos are typically unplanned and often filmed by chance. The increasing ubiquity of smartphones and mobile internet has played a significant role in popularizing this form of video production, enabling a wide range of people to document events as they unfold and to disseminate their footage almost instantly. Unlike journalist videos, which are produced by professional outsiders, witness videos are created by bystanders whose relationship to the events they capture is inherently unpredictable. In contrast to journalist-produced footage, the following three examples of witness videos from Cape Town demonstrate the diversity of perspectives and narrative framings that shape the perception of seemingly ›authentic‹ video documentation.

Witness Videos Documenting Protests in Cape Town

Audio-visual documentation of the 30 October 2013 service delivery protest – discussed earlier in relation to SABC and News24 coverage – was not limited to professional journalists. It also included footage captured by observers who »happened to be there.«[52] One such example is a 48-second video uploaded by user Stuart Buchanan, showing unedited, low-resolution footage filmed from a balcony on Shortmarket Street.[53]

Buchanan's shaky camera captures a moment in which protesters run past a storefront and appear to scuffle over a cardboard box left on the pavement. A voice in the background exclaims, »Oh my God,« expressing the shock of those watching from above.[54] Titled »Looting after Cape Town protest,« the video has been viewed more times on YouTube

51 Int. 20, Documentary Filmmaker, Cape Town, 29 July 2016.
52 Int. 38, Researcher, Rio de Janeiro, 8 September 2016.
53 Vid. 15, Buchanan, Looting after Cape Town protest
54 Vid. 15, Buchanan, Looting after Cape Town protest

than the SABC and News24 videos combined. Its wide circulation provoked strong criticism of the protesters, including openly racist comments. One such comment read:

> »…a Land closer to town he said.... Hahaha, we will give them a land closer to Nigeria and Zimbabwe. We don't want them in Cape Town. The bastards are tot [sic] wanted in a clean white and brown city like Cape Town. Hellen [sic] must do something very fast !!! The black bastards are a destructive species and will destroy our city !!!«[55]

While the video itself cannot be held responsible for the hate speech it provoked – and the comment section has since been disabled – the shakiness of the camera, the audible reactions of shocked bystanders, and the absence of narration or contextual information contribute to the perception of the video as ›authentic‹ and unmanipulated. As a witness video, it appears to offer unfiltered, ›real‹ evidence, even though it captures only a fragment of the protest and lacks any explanation of the broader context in which the events occurred.

A second video, titled »service delivery protest cape town,«[56] offers another distant perspective. Filmed from inside a building, the camera pans slowly from right to left, capturing a crowd running down the street while a siren wails in the background. Inside the foyer, an escalator carries people who appear indifferent to the events unfolding outside. The 42-second unedited clip is accompanied by a brief description: »ANC members protesting in Cape Town, South Africa who were in town to support an ANC councilor that was being prosecuted in court for [a] series of cases involving dumping of faeces.«[57] This description provides the context that the video itself cannot convey due to ist lack of editing. It frames the protest not as a spontaneous act of public dissent, but as a partisan demonstration in support of an ANC figure – thereby shaping the viewer's interpretation of the otherwise ambiguous footage.

A third video, titled »Service delivery protest in Cape Town...at the Civic Centre 05.02.14,« offers a more immersive perspective.[58] Posted by YouTube user Kenny Nagel on the same day as the protest, the 7-minute video was filmed from within the demonstration. It captures

55 Vid. 13, SABC, Service delivery protest

56 Vid. 29, Galaga, service delivery protest

57 This protest took place in solidarity with the nine citizens, among them Andile Lili, who were facing charges for their involvement in the so-called poo protest at Cape Town International Airport on 25 June 2013. They were ultimately »sentenced to three years imprisonment, suspended for five years« by the Bellville Magistrates' Court in August 2015 (Petersen, »Suspended Sentences for Cape Town Airport Poo Protesters.«).

58 Vid. 30, Nagel, Service delivery protest

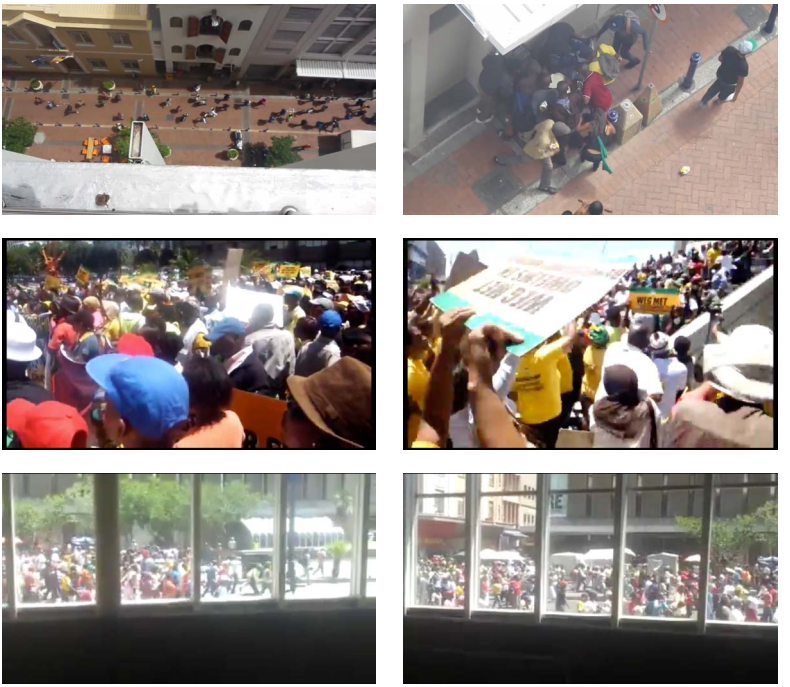

Fig. 24 Witness Videos, Cape Town

protesters toy-toying, singing, and listening to a speech by one of the organizers. The camera pans across the crowd, and while the visuals are low-resolution and the wind distorts the audio, the footage conveys a sense of presence. The video includes a few simple cuts, likely made using the pause function on a smartphone – a technique one RMF media team member described as »instant editing.«[59]

Witnesses filming in Rio de Janeiro

In Rio de Janeiro, protests are often documented simultaneously by both activist and witness videos. The potential for these two forms of video-making to complement each other is powerfully illustrated by an incident that occurred on 10 October 2015.[60] On that day, an activist named Bruno was arrested by police and charged with attacking officers

59 Int. 29, RMF Activist, Cape Town, 14 August 2016

60 The story is explained in detail in the third episode of the documentary #DesdeJunho (Vid. 05, Mariano, Desde Junho 3 21:46 – 25:11).

Fig. 25 Witness Video of a Lethal Police Attack

using a Molotov cocktail – an accusation that could have resulted in a lengthy prison sentence.

Following his arrest, Bruno posted a video appealing for help in proving his innocence. Mídia Ninja responded immediately, calling on witnesses who had filmed the protest to submit their footage. Over the course of a long night, a group of ›Ninjas‹ reviewed and compiled dozens of witness videos documenting the confrontation. By marking Bruno's position in each clip and arranging the footage chronologically, they were able to reconstruct the sequence of events.

The final edited video revealed that a plainclothes civil police officer had infiltrated the crowd and thrown the Molotov cocktail at his own colleagues. The same officer then identified Bruno, who was pulled behind police lines and arrested. The video exposed the staged nature of the accusation and the police's strategy of escalation. As Bruno Torturra from Mídia Ninja São Paulo later recounted, the evidence was so compelling that »the main newscast was forced to broadcast the video.«[61]

This case demonstrates how bottom-up video production – combining the immediacy of witness footage with the strategic editing and framing of activist media – can serve emancipatory goals. Another instance where witness videos play a key role is in the raw documentation of violence, as the next example illustrates.

Execution-style killings by police, which occur with alarming regularity in Rio de Janeiro, are often captured in witness videos. One such video, just 32 seconds long, was published by the collective Mídia

61 Vid. 05, Mariano, Desde Junho 3 22:19

Independente Coletiva (MIC) to protect the identity of the videographer.[62] It contains graphic footage of the killing of two young men. Filmed on a smartphone from behind a window – presumably in the videographer's apartment – the footage shows a small street near the Daniel Piza Municipal School for Journalism in Rio's North Zone, partially obscured by trees and a canal.

At first, the low-resolution video makes it difficult to identify what it lies in the side of the road. Then, a police officer with a machine gun enters the frame from the right, followed by a second officer. While the second police officer enters the image from the right, a gunshot is audible. Followed by the echo of a second gunshot. The videographer realizes what he is seeing and with a surpressed shock says »Fuck! They are killing them!«[63] At this point the viewer of the video is left with no doubt that it is actually two human bodies on the ground. One officer moves to the second victim and fires again at close range – it is an execution that is being filmed.

In the background, the videographer can be heard telling his child to leave the room. The description of the video distributed on the YouTube channel of MIC claims that there was a third victim:

> »In the same operation, Maria Eduarda, 13, was taking a physical education class at the Daniel Piza Municipal School in Pavuna when she was hit by a bullet during the police action and died in front of her schoolmates.«[64]

Unpredictable Spectators Producing Shaky Footage

The second type of videos about protests and police violence are ›witness videos‹. Witness videos, which are also known as amateur videos or citizenship journalism. While the expansion of capacities for such a form of bottom-up video production is unquestioned, the techno-determinist narrative by »evangelists of social media«[65] that equates the expansion of opportunities to film with media democratization should be treated with caution.

Witness videos are typically filmed by individuals who happen to be present at the scene of an unpredictable event. These videos are

62 Vid. 02, MIC, PMs executam jovens

63 Vid. 02, MIC, PMs executam jovens 0:11

64 »Na mesma operação Maria Eduarda, de 13 anos, estava fazendo aula de educação física na Escola Municipal Daniel Piza, na Pavuna, quando foi atingida por uma bala durante a ação da polícia, vindo a falecer diante de seus colegas de escola.« Vid. 02, MIC, PMs executam jovens

65 Gladwell, »Small Change. Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted.«

usually captured with handheld devices, most often smartphones, and are shared through personal networks such as WhatsApp or posted on social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter. The person responsible for the filming is most often someone who does not have an immediate connection to the events being filmed.[66] As Renata, a researcher and video activist from Rio de Janeiro, explains, a witness videographer is an »amateur […] who didn't predispose himself to being there. He happened to be there.«[67] Because of this coincidental presence, witness videos are rarely guided by a specific agenda. The range of subjects they capture is vast, but those that go viral often depict sensational content – especially violence.[68]

Witness videos are often of low audio-visual quality. This is partially related to the technical specifications of the devices used for filming – typically smartphones with low-quality cameras and no microphone – as well as to circumstantial challenges, such as poor light, or to the videographer's limited know-how in camera handling. Rushed camera panning, the muffled sound of the wind, or the videographer's own audible exclamations are common features of witness videos. Most witness footage documents events in the form of relatively short, unedited videos with no contextualization or narrative structure. Often, they are not even disseminated by the person who filmed them, but rather by activists or journalists.[69] These features of ›raw‹ footage, paradoxically, often functions as a marker of their ›authenticity‹. The unpolished nature of witness videos lends them an ›aura of authenticity' that can make them appear more trustworthy and less biased than journalist or activist videos.

During protest marches in Rio, filming with smartphones has become a common practice, and innumerable unedited witness videos circulate online after demonstrations. Activists as well as passers-by pull out their smartphones, film short segments, and share them. However, given the engaged scene of video activism that posts live-streams and video reports about protests, witness videos play a minor role in covering protests in Rio. The audio-visuals produced by video activist collectives provide sufficient materials for interested audiences, and witness videos therefore rarely reach high numbers of views, have strong effects on public opinion, or provide counter-narratives. In Cape Town, this role of reporting

66 See the discussion of witness video about the »looting« in CBD in this section, which exemplifies the ambivalence in how witnesses relate to the events they capture.

67 Int. 38, Researcher, Rio de Janeiro, 8 September 2016.

68 Chapter Seven looks at the topographies of visibility and the role witness videos play in it.

69 Witness videos often circulate in closed communication channels, such as WhatsApp chats, before being made public.

on major protests largely remained with journalists and individual intermediaries, some of them acting as witness videographers as examples from above illustrate.

The occurrence of dramatic events – especially incidents of lethal police violence – is by its nature unpredictable. The coverage of such attacks has not been sufficiently discussed in this chapter but plays a major role in the next two chapters. Focusing on the depiction of protests aimed at differentiating the three types of videos and does hardly work for instances of police violence in marginalized urban areas since there is hardly any other recorded audio-visual than witness materials. Graphic footage filmed with smartphones and shaky camera handling is often a ›game changer‹ in providing evidence of lethal and illegal police attacks and rebutting flawed official accounts.[70] The dissemination of such witness videos, however, may have serious repercussions for the individuals who filmed them.[71] Videographers thus often pass on their videos to intermediaries to ensure an additional layer of anonymity. These intermediaries can be either trusted media activists or local comunicação comunitária collectives.

The perspective of the eyewitness videographer in witness videos is, both literarily and metaphorically, that of an *unpredictable spectator*. In practical terms, this means that witness videos are shot from a variety of positions – be they from rooftop terraces, balconies, bridges or sidewalks, out of car windows, or simply from street level. Metaphorically, this unpredictability reflects the spectator's ambivalent relation to the events she is recording.

6.3 Activist Videos – Autogestion in Representation

This section turns to the practices of making activist videos by examining the depictions of three protest marches. The goal is to illustrate how activist videos are filmed and what they typically document. The first example shows how coverage of the storm on ALERJ on 17 June 2013 differed in activist videos in comparison to journalist videos. The second example highlights the challenges and complexities of making activist videos in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. In the final example, I show how an activist video covering a student march to the Parliament of South Africa in Cape Town differs in several respects from journalist videos of the same event.

70 Chapter Seven and Eight present a number of such video examples.
71 See the discussion in the Chapter Seven.

Emerging Practices of Video Activism in Cape Town

The RMF media team recorded and uploaded six videos on 21 October 2015, when student activists marched to Parliament in Cape Town. These videos, shared on the movement's Facebook page, offer a kaleidoscopic view of the day's events through a series of short clips – each ranging from 10 to 68 seconds in length.[72]

The first video shows a group of protesters addressing a UCT spokesperson;[73] the second captures the same spokesperson responding to the crowd with a megaphone.[74] The third follows a group of students entering a UCT building, proclaiming that »workers and students storm Security outsourcing company G4S offices« and »SHUT the university down.«[75] The fourth video shows students on a bus, allegedly en route to the march at Parliament.[76] The fifth depicts students marching with banners and chanting »fees must fall!«[77] The final video documents an urgent plenary meeting where the arrests of fellow students and the outcomes of court cases are discussed.[78]

Produced and uploaded by the RMF media team, these videos offer brief but rich impressions of the unfolding protest. They were clearly intended to inform and mobilize fellow students. The videographers, as engaged insiders within the movement, identified as activists rather than neutral observers. While the short duration, low audiovisual quality, and lack of editing might suggest they are witness videos, I have prioritized the relationship between videographer and event over the technical properties of the footage and hence labelled them as activist videos. During periods of mobilization, the RMF movement regularly published such short videos on its Facebook page – many of which received astonishingly high view counts.[79]

The coverage of the RMF protest on 21 October 2015 differs in nuance between the activist-produced videos and the video titled »student protests in cape town turn violent. police and students clash« by Eric Miller.[80] Miller, an acclaimed freelance photographer who was

72 Vid. 22, RMF, Protests continue; Vid. 23, RMF, We are holding hostage; Vid. 24, RMF, We have shut university down; Vid. 25, RMF, Azania will rise; Vid. 26, RMF, [untitled]; Vid. 27, RMF, Urgently plenary
73 Vid. 22, RMF, Protests continue
74 Vid. 23, RMF, We are holding hostage
75 Vid. 24, RMF, We have shut university down
76 Vid. 25, RMF, Azania will rise
77 Vid. 26, RMF, [untitled]
78 Vid. 27, RMF, Urgently plenary
79 See the discussion about the topographies of visibility in Chapter Eight for a more detailed explanation.
80 Vid. 16, trouble media, student protests

Fig. 26 RMF Videos

active in the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s, has expressed his »frustrat[ion] with the [post-apartheid] media's misuse of power.«[81] He presents the student protest from a perspective critical of both media coverage and police intervention, as reflected in the description of his video:

> »Arrived late today at parliament, it felt like I was watching, photographing my children, and I was proud of their commitment and restraint in the face of harsh police action. The ebb and flow was not dissimilar to protests in 1980's and then the mainstream media supported a narrative which almost always disingenuously had police simply 'reacting to protestor violence'. The police actions were same now as then, and the narrative is false now as then.«[82]

Miller compares student protests during apartheid with those in 2015. His perception of »mainstream media« offering a biased portrayal of the movement and of »harsh police action« motivated him to produce a skillfully edited video of high audio-visual quality.[83] The video itself is a compilation of impressions from the protest march. It presents police forces as aggressors confronting peaceful students, without any voice-over or subtitling.

81 South African History Online, »Biographies – Eric Miller.«
82 Vid. 16, trouble media, student protests
83 The video in lower resolution was uploaded first on 22 October 2015 and received considerably more views than the same video uploaded on 26 October 2015 in high resolution. The difference in the audio-visual quality is related to converting the files to lower quality due to the challenges with the availability and affordability of fast internet connections. Vid. 16, trouble media, student protests

Repeated scenes of police charging at students – many of whom have raised their hands to signal peaceful intent – convey a sense of repression against those raising their voices. The parallel audio track, recorded during the protest, captures student singing and intensifies the emotional impact of the edited scenes. The video ends with the tumult of a third arrest. »For our rights! For our rights!« echoes the voice of an arrestee from the back of a police car, his fist raised before the doors close and the video ends.

Rio's Video Activist Scene: From the Storm on ALERJ to the March for Life

»Don't hate the media – be the media!«[84]

Alongside the violent repression through heavy-handed police action during the *Jornadas de Junho* and beyond, the hostility of corporate media toward emancipatory protests significantly contributed to the flourishing of media activist video production in Rio de Janeiro. The biased, top-down reporting by Brazilian journalists provoked acts of *autogestion* in audiovisual production and spurred the rapid rise of bottom-up video making. The Indymedia slogan – »Don't hate the media, be the media!« – became a common practice, popularized by numerous individuals and collectives. This section presents two examples of activist videos portraying the temporary occupation of ALERJ on 17 June 2013.

Activist and photographer Matias Maxx was watching TV coverage of escalating protests in São Paulo when he heard about the mobilization on 17 June in Rio de Janeiro. »Man, I have to record this,« he told himself, and went out to film a few days later.[85] The video »The battle

84 Indymedia popularized this slogan following the ›Battle of Seattle‹ in 1999. The massive demonstrations staged to criticize the World Trade Organization at its summit in Seattle were met with heavy repression by police. The reporting from the protests was coordinated in a makeshift media center in Seattle during the events. Indymedia is a decentralized initiative for grassroot media production that »combines journalism and activism« (Fremlin, »Agenda Setting: Independent vs. Corporate Media,« 55) and opened up a space for counter-hegemonic narratives focusing on bottom-up media production (Giraud, »Has Radical Participatory Online Media Really ›Failed‹? Indymedia and Its Legacies«; Hamm, »Indymedia – Concatenations of Physical and Virtual Spaces.«). For a review of 20 years indymedia see also interviews with founding members on Democracy Now!, »›Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media‹: Reflections on 20 Years of Indymedia, a Radical Media Movement.«

85 Vid. 03, Mariano, Desde Junho 1 19:28 – 19:32

of ALERJ, 17 June 2013,«[86] which he produced that day, captured the violent clashes at the protest and became one of the emblematic memories of that moment.

The video begins with a small crowd in a side street attacking police by shooting slingshots and throwing stones, coconut shells, and other available objects before eventually erecting barricades. A cut at 1:40 minutes introduces a montage of impressions: fires lit on the steps of the legislature and a crowd dancing around the flames; protesters breaking into a branch of Itaú bank and destroying its ATMs; a burned car turned upside down and sprayed with slogans such as »2,95 R$« in reference to the old public transport fares; two activists breaking into the legislature building through a window; and Polícia Militar officers – the choque units trained for urban warfare – in riot gear, fighting back with dogs.[87] Matias Maxx left the raw footage at a friend's house that night when he went home – »the next morning the [edited] video was published,« he recounts.[88] A week later, the video appeared in English on Vice News, alongside an extensive article referenced in the description of the original video.[89]

A second account that deserves attention is a video produced by Jornal A Nova Democracia. It recorded the moment when protesters broke through police lines and stormed the Palácio Tiradentes of ALERJ.[90] This unedited video, shot by Patrick Granja – equipped with a gas mask and a single-lens reflex camera – shows the historic events of 17 June through the eyes of the protesters gathered in front of the steps leading to the legislature's entrance. The video provides a chronological account of how protesters took control of the stairs. At first, demonstrators confront about two dozen police officers positioned in two lines on the steps. Then the police fire rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowd. In the video, which includes no commentary, the sound of tear gas canisters and rubber bullets being fired is audible, along with people screaming »no violence« and »stop.«[91] Nevertheless, the shots continue to echo until a group of protesters begins breaking through the fencing that separates the police from the crowd. From this moment on, events accelerate: the police retreat toward the building's entrance, a small fire is ignited on the stairway by a Molotov cocktail, and more protesters climb the steps, causing the metal fences to collapse. The police flee into the building. When the camera turns around, the huge crowd cheering the occupation of ALERJ becomes visible.

86 Vid. 10, Maxx, A Batalha da Alerj
87 Vid. 10, Maxx, A Batalha da Alerj
88 Vid. 03, Mariano, Desde Junho 1 19:45 – 19:50
89 https://www.vice.com/pt_br/article/pgezpy/a-tomada-da-alerj
90 Vid. 08, AND, Veja com exclusividade
91 Vid. 08, AND, Veja com exclusividade 1:55-2:30.

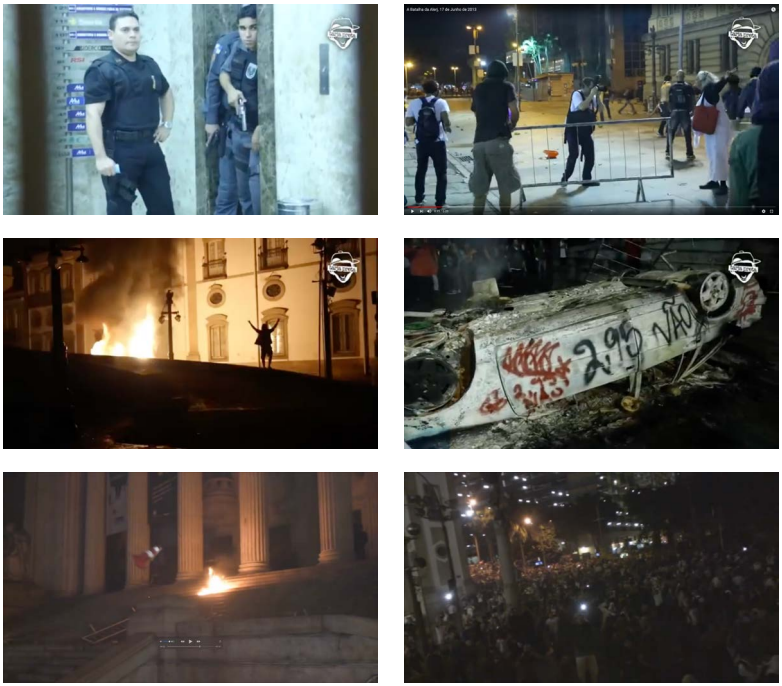

Fig. 27 Protest on 17 june 2013

These two early examples of activist video production inspired more people to pick up cameras and document protest events, eventually leading to the formation of the media activist collectives discussed in the previous chapter. What characterizes activist videos about protests in Rio de Janeiro is that they are filmed from a perspective ›from within‹ – the videographers see themselves as activists, too. These videos aim to amplify the claims and demands of the protests they cover – often by filming visual artefacts such as banners and conducting short interviews with protesters – and they extensively document police aggression.

While the ALERJ occupation marked a symbolic reclaiming of political space in the city center, protests in Rio's favelas unfold under far more precarious and dangerous conditions. This shapes the strategies and tactics employed by video activists on the ground. The following example details some of these practices and how they respond to heightened risks.

Activists Filming in Favelas

»Peace without a voice is not peace, it is fear.«[92]

The »March in Favor of Life«[93] was a street demonstration staged on 25 February 2015 in Rio de Janeiro, at the Maré favela complex in the city's North Zone. It was organized in response to the killing of several urban residents by the police, as a video explains:

> »On 12/02, five friends were shot by the military in Salsa and Merengue while on their way home from a party. One of the occupants of the vehicle, besides having lost his leg, is still in a serious condition. […] On 20/02, a mason was murdered while working in Vila do Jõao, ›mistaken for a trafficker‹. […] On 21/02, five more people were shot inside a fully loaded Kombi between Maré and Bonsucesso in Vila do Pinheiro.«[94]

As Chapter Four pointed out, living in a favela in Rio is closely associated with an increased risk of lethal violence. Police and *Polícia Militar* attacks can occur at any moment. The following video case study shows how this everyday violence translates into the repression of protest marches. While protesters in the city center regularly encounter repressive police tactics involving tear gas and batons, those in the favelas risk being targeted with live ammunition. According to an activist and researcher working in the nearby Complexo do Alemão community, »demonstrations are usually deserted, with few people, because people are afraid.«[95]

Activists in the favelas face threats such as »We know who you are« and »we know where you live,« issued by police and drug cartels – often working in collaboration to suppress dissent.[96] These threats instill fear but also deepen activists' »commitment« to voicing their concerns when they choose to take to the streets.[97] As a result, street

92 Banner from the march and displayed in Vid. 20, MIC, Rebelião no Complexo da Maré

93 »Marcha em favor da vida«

94 »No dia 12/02 cinco amigos tiveram o caro fuzilado pelos militares no Salsa e Merengue quando voltavam de uma festa. Um dos ocupantes de veículo além de perdida a perna, continua internado em estado grave. [...] Dia 20/02 um pedreiro foi assassinado enquanto fazia o seu trabalho na Vila do Jõao, ›confundido com traficante‹. [..] No dia 21/02, mais cinco pessoas foram alvejadas dentro de uma Kombi, que fazia lotada Maré x Bonsucesso, na Vila do Pinheiro.« Vid. 20, MIC, Rebelião no Complexo da Maré

95 Int. 16, Community Organizer, Rio de Janeiro, 11 January 2016.

96 Int. 16, Community Organizer, Rio de Janeiro, 11 January 2016.

97 Int. 17, Video Activist, Rio de Janeiro, 14 January 2016.

demonstrations are typically staged outside the favelas, along major roads, because »you can not protest in favelas.« [98] In the case of the March for Life, the demonstration took place on the Linha Amarela city highway.[99]

The MIC[100] and AND[101] videos documenting the protest differ systematically in two key aspects of editing: first, in how they present contextual information (text vs. voice-over), and second, in their use of visual emphasis (e.g., slow motion, framing of interviews). The MIC video begins with a black screen displaying text that states eleven favela residents had been shot by police in the preceding ten days. The AND video conveys the same information through graphic photographs of the crime scenes, narrated by a voice-over.

In both videos, expositing shots of the crowd of protesters marching along the Linha Amarela highway follow. The MIC video interviews an elder woman who lives in Maré. She accuses the ›pacifying‹ police UPP of being a »hoax« which constantly kills »innocent people«.[102] A second interviewee complains equally vehemently about the violence and high number of deaths at the hands of the UPP. The video shows only the interviewee's torso to obscure the identity of the man, who does not want to be recognized for fear of retaliation.[103]

Both videos then jump from the peaceful demonstration to a sudden eruption of violence, which is caused by the arrival of police choc-troops. A stand-off develops at the entrance to the Maré favela: police officers fire tear gas and flash bombs in the direction of the residents who retreated inside the favela and respond by throwing stones, bottles and other objects. The MIC video then catches a police officer shooting a live gun towards protesters. As this act is difficult to discern in the audio-visuals, the MIC video repeats the scene in slow motion accompanied by the following caption: »Police officer firing a pistol.« [104]

98 »Você não pode fazer manifestação em favela« (Int. 16, Community Organizer, Rio de Janeiro, 11 January 2016).

99 Linha Amarelha is a privatized highway that is of crucial importance for connecting traffic between the airport and the city's South Zone. In an interview, a media activist who filmed the protest told me that residents of Maré claim that the LAMSA consortium, which owns the highway, also funds the corporate media. Maré residents thus see media reports as being biased towards their protests, especially when unrest negatively affects traffic flow on Linha Amarela and, with it, the income of LAMSA (Int. 17, Video Activist, Rio de Janeiro, 14 January 2016).

100 Vid. 20, MIC, Rebelião no Complexo da Maré

101 Vid. 21, AND, Moradores do Complexo da Maré

102 Vid. 20, MIC, Rebelião no Complexo da Maré 0:50-1:30.

103 Vid. 20, MIC, Rebelião no Complexo da Maré 1:55

104 »Policial atira com pistola.« Vid. 20, MIC, Rebelião no Complexo da Maré

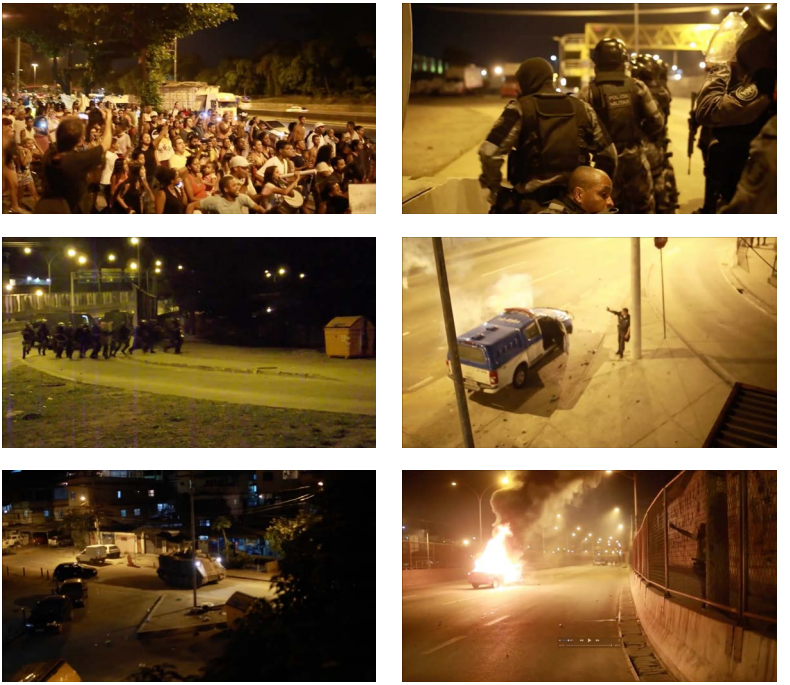

Fig. 28 Rebellion in Maré

The chaos and open confrontation ends when the police officers are »forced to retreat«, as the voice-over in the AND video explains.[105] This allows the protesters to reoccupy the Linha Amarela highway. Both videos again show similar footage, in this instance of video activists running up onto a pedestrian viaduct over the highway in order to get into a better position from which to film the ›reoccupation‹. Remarkable about this scene are the tactics adopted by the media activists to remain close together. By intentionally taking advantage of their collective movement in triangular positions, the video activists make it easier to defend themselves from any attacks by the police and ensure in case of attacks to have record evidence. Whereas an isolated cameraperson could easily be detained and have his or her audio-visual material confiscated, the video activists provide each other with mutual protection.

The reason for the video activists' rush over the viaduct becomes clear in the following scene presented in both videos. Two police officers are standing next to a police vehicle on the other side of a fence on

105 Vid. 21, AND, Moradores do Complexo da Maré 5:43–5:45.

the side of the highway; there is no sign of any immediate threat. One of the officers then targets his gun at the protesters and pulls the trigger, at which the second officer drives off while firing additional shots towards the crowd from his vehicle. In the AND video, Patrick Granja's voice-over reports that, according to local residents, at least one person has been wounded in the police attack.[106] This footage of police officers intentionally shooting at protesters has become an emblematic moment that has been reproduced in numerous other audio-visual productions, thus becoming part of collective memory. At the end of the MIC video, five army tanks roll under the pedestrian viaduct in the direction of Complexo Maré, while a car that has been turned upside down and set on fire by local residents burns on Linha Amarela. The deployment of army tanks against urban citizens symbolizes the state's incapacity to respond to the demand of the protesters to stop police killings in favelas and instead answers to these demands with more violent suppression.

Despite slight differences between the MIC and AND videos, both offer a similar account of the March in Favor of Life, often using nearly identical visuals. Together, they demonstrate that audiovisual production in favelas differs significantly from filming in the middle- and upper-class neighborhoods of Rio's Central or South zones. The media activists documenting the Maré protest have built close relationships with the local community, earning its trust. However, filming chaotic events – especially clashes with police – affects the footage itself: activists who stay close together for protection often produce similar material under conditions that are rarely conducive to high-quality filming. The result is frequently out-of-focus or poorly lit visuals.[107] Nonetheless, these two videos fill a critical gap left by corporate media by documenting police violence and amplifying the voices of residents marginalized in corporate media narratives.

106 Vid. 21, AND, Moradores do Complexo da Maré 7:27.

107 Smartphone cameras would not have been able to pick up police officer firing lethal ammunition at the entrance of the favela as the MIC video did. The semi-professional equipment to make videos employed guarantees a higher audio-visual quality. A quality that serves not merely aesthetical purposes but also the practical purpose of ensuring evidence.

Engaged Insiders Filming ›From Within‹

> »We are not journalists, […] and we are not filmmakers either, we are media activists. We have a position.«[108]

Building on the previous examples, this section explores the practices and perspectives of video activists who document protests and police violence – what I refer to as activist videos produced by engaged insiders. While terms such as ›alternative media‹, ›radical media‹, ›citizen journalism‹, and even ›riot porn‹ are sometimes used, I use the term ›activist videos‹ to emphasize the political commitment and embeddedness of the videographers.

Activist videos are made by engaged insiders. These videographers follow local political developments closely and draw on extensive social networks for information.[109] In Rio, media activists often collaborate on the ground – as illustrated by the filming of the March in Favor of Life by the Maré community and the use of a shared »editing island« for post-production.

Video activists apply similar techniques in their depiction of protests. Establishing shots – used to set the scene – typically show protesters gathering, preparing banners, or police forces taking position. These are often followed by footage from the march, enriched with interview clips that capture participants' voices and articulate their motivations. When clashes occur, violence frequently becomes the dramatic climax of the video. This may include scenes of activists destroying objects such as ATMs or resisting police aggression. Such images – often graphic – are usually edited to depict the police as the aggressor. Video activists claim collective authorship by inserting the logo of their collective – and, in some cases adding individual names – at the beginning or mostly at the end of a video.

It is difficult for video activists to anticipate when and where incidents of police violence will occur. To document threats, attacks, or extra-judicial killings by the police, video activists – especially those in Rio de Janeiro – often rely on footage filmed by witnesses and sent via messenger services like WhatsApp or Telegram. These videos are either disseminated in their original form or edited into reports that contextualize the footage and often include interviews with victims' relatives.[110]

108 »Nós não somos jornalistas, [nós afirmamos isso o tempo todo,] e também não somos cineastas, nós somos midiativistas. A gente tem uma posição.« (Int. 13, MIC and Mariachi Focus Group, Rio de Janeiro, 25 November 2015).

109 Int. 38, Researcher, Rio de Janeiro, 8 September 2016.

110 A good example for activist videos incorporating footage from witnesses is the video about the assassination of Jhonata by police in Rio, which is

In their audiovisual accounts of protests, activist videos defend the right to protest and condemn police violence. References to forms of structural violence are often provided in combination with contextualizing information. This may include, for example, statistics relating to evictions or lethal police assaults or the historicization of contemporary events.

Video activists use semi-professional equipment such as SLR cameras or livestream via smartphones. Their »armament«[111] typically includes one or more cameras, additional lenses, extra batteries, and backup SSD storage cards. Activist videos – usually of semi-professional or professional standard – employ editing techniques such as fast cutting, black screens with text between clips, subtitles, and, in fewer cases, voice-overs. Music and other audio elements are often added to heighten emotional impact. During editing, the footage is typically condensed to a standard length of three to seven minutes – similar to news reports.

To disseminate their videos, video activists rely on established online channels such as a collective's YouTube channel or Facebook account or even its own website.[112] Video activists adopt an involved perspective, intentionally siding with protesters and urban citizens in their battles against the governing authorities and the police – reflected in the ›view from within‹ that their videos provide.

Video activists take the perspective of *engaged insiders*. They identify with the justifications for protests and show empathy for the victims of police violence. In our interview[113] members of MIC and Mariachi video activist collectives described their role as media activists as someone who »knows that he is in the conflict zone; he is not naively participating in this environment, but really proposing himself as a democratic reporter.«[114]

discussed in detail in Chapter Eight. In the case that police attacks are not lethal – for example on protests and in situations of forced evictions – victims themselves are interviewed as long as becoming publicly visible does not threaten them.

111 Int. 13, MIC and Mariachi Focus Group, Rio de Janeiro, 25 November 2015.

112 The reasons why most Rio video activist websites closed after various attempts to make themselves independent of corporate social media networks such as Facebook and YouTube is discussed in the Chapter Seven. In Cape Town, the social media channels of the movements themselves – for example Rhodes Must Fall – or journalist sites are employed as major channels for video distribution.

113 The focus group interview was conducted with five members from the two collectives and in collaboration with my colleague Lívia Alcântara from UERJ.

114 »ele ta na área de conflito, eles sabe que ele ta na área de conflito, ele não ta ali ingenuamente participando daquele ambiente, ele realmente se propõe

Being in the position of an *engaged insider* translates literally into shooting videos from within protest marches. Metaphorically, this perspective corresponds to the political positionalities of video activists who align themselves with the causes and demands of an emancipatory politics that defends human rights and aims to amplify voices of urban citizens in struggles against patriarchal, colonial and capitalist structures. Activist and witness video making function in a symbiotic relationship.

6.4 Emancipatory and Bottom-Up Video Productions

This chapter introduced a heuristic typology of journalist, activist, and witness videos to enable a more nuanced discussion of how different forms of video production visualize urban struggles and their emancipatory potential.

Journalist videos by professional outsiders are hardly a form of bottom-up city making. Economic pressures, hierarchical internal organization and concentration of ownership structures make up the own logics in which journalism has to function. This is not to say that journalism is incapable of embracing bottom-up practices of filming, but by integrating them into their logic of reporting the audio-visual products are inserted in a different logic. Individual journalists and independent outlets such as *GroundUp* or *Jornal A Nova Democracia* have challenged dominant narratives and exposed injustice. However, they remain exceptions, often reliant on external funding, and are constrained by the broader media ecosystem. In Brazil especially, mainstream journalism frequently reproduces conservative, top-down perspectives that stand in opposition to emancipatory urban movements.

Witness videos are most inclusive form of video making in terms of accessibility. Witness video potentiated the opportunities of bottom-up audio-visual representation on an unprecedented scale. The emancipatory potential of witness videos is however ambivalent. The position of being an unpredictable spectator can have a significant role for capturing video with an enormous mobilizing effect for urban movements at times. At the same time, witness videos can re-enforce stereotypes since the often short and unedited videos are credited with a high level of authenticity, which can be misleading. A single scene of looting as depicted by a user can be an effective form of delegitimizing a protest march without ever having discussed the cause of mobilization. Being a very inclusive and bottom-up practice of filming with unpredictable effects

a ser um repórter democrático« (Int. 13, MIC and Mariachi Focus Group, Rio de Janeiro, 25 November 2015).

for emancipatory right to the city struggles, witness videos together with activist videos pose a challenge to journalist reporting.

Finally, activist video productions aim at amplifying voices from the bottom-up. Given the fact that video activists as engaged insiders emanated from urban movements struggling for emancipation, their goals to use videos for emancipation by creating structures for radically transforming reporting from the bottom-up is unquestioned. Video activist collectives organized themselves in independent and non-hierarchical networks to amplify the voices of urban movements and citizens. However, the bottom-up organization is often built on the precondition of having certain levels of privilege, which enable individuals to effectively participate in the work intensive collective work.[115] For marginalized urban citizens it is often impossible to permanently engage in the inner circles of (media-)activism in Brazil, while individualized attempts of activist-video production that are more prominent in Cape Town struggle with other challenges that are highlighted in the next chapter.

Building on the typology and its implications, the next chapter shifts focus from the practices of video production to the question of visibility. It explores how activist and witness videos circulate online, and how digital platforms shape what becomes seen, shared, and remembered in the struggle for urban justice.

115 See the discussion about privileges in media activist collectives in Rio in Chapter Five.