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Mobile Culture in Brazil

Creative uses of mobile technologies in art, games, and low income communities



Claudio Bueno, Redes Vestíveis, 2010

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Why Brazil?



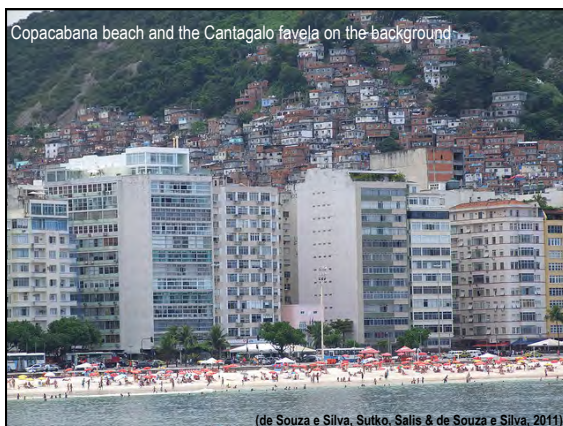
Why Brazil?

Brazilian Mobile Market

- 5th largest global market in absolute numbers
- 243 million cell phones as of January 2017 (117%)
- 164 million pre-paid cell phones as of January 2017 (67%)*



(teleco.com.br)




Global South

Research foci

How low income and resource constrained populations appropriate and adopt technology for economic development (Donner, 2009).

M4D (ICTD)



(Furuholt & Matolay, 2011) (Jensen, 2007)

Global South

Infrastructure and policy

- Recent privatization of telecommunications
- Large number of pre-paid cell phones
- Missing landline infrastructure in slums
- CPP

Social practices:

- “Beeping”
- “Sharing” of cell phones
- Cell phone theft (17% of thefts target cell phones exclusively)

(Sey, 2010; Steenson & Donner, 2009; Ling, 2011; Donner, 2008; etc.)



With difficulty

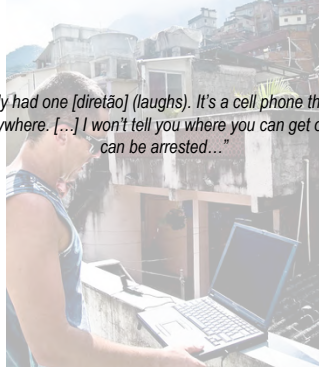
“I am even afraid even of answering my phone on the streets, with fear of being robbed.”

“Even if the cell phone just rings, somebody might follow you after you get out of the bus and take it. Then, if the device is good, he will sell it in the favela. But if it is a cheap cell phone, he will give it to the kids as a toy”.

“I then waited 10 minutes and thought: ‘If anybody calls within 10 minutes, I will return the phone; if not, I will turn it off.’ Nobody called and I turned it off. Then I bought another SIM card and gave the phone as a present to my brother. It was a brand new phone!”

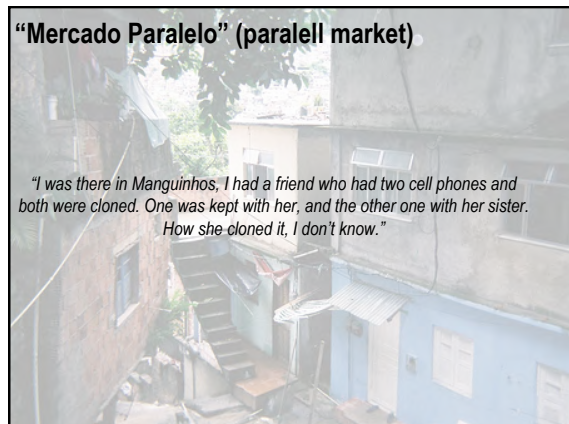
“Mercado Paralelo” (paralell market)

“Yes, I already had one [diretão] (laughs). It’s a cell phone that you can call anybody, anywhere. [...] I won’t tell you where you can get one, because I can be arrested...”

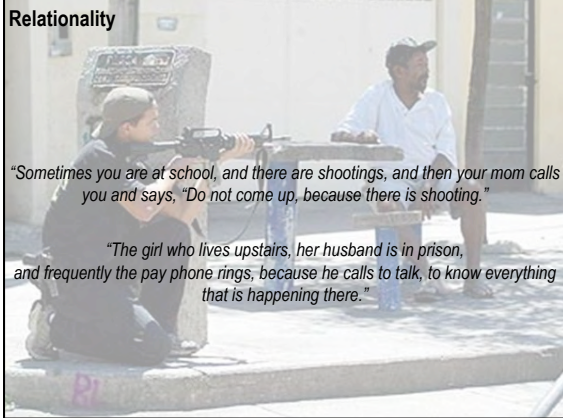


“Mercado Paralelo” (paralell market)

“I was there in Manguinhos, I had a friend who had two cell phones and both were cloned. One was kept with her, and the other one with her sister. How she cloned it, I don’t know.”



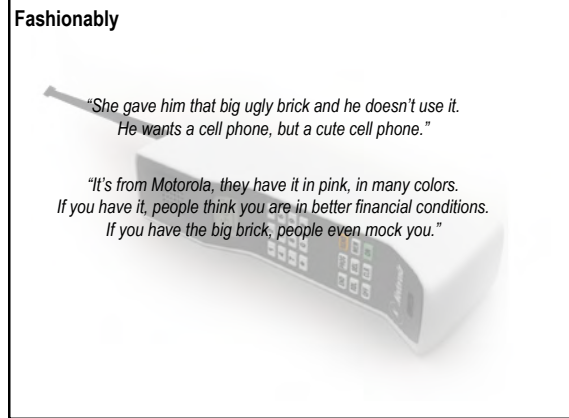
Relationality



"Sometimes you are at school, and there are shootings, and then your mom calls you and says, "Do not come up, because there is shooting."

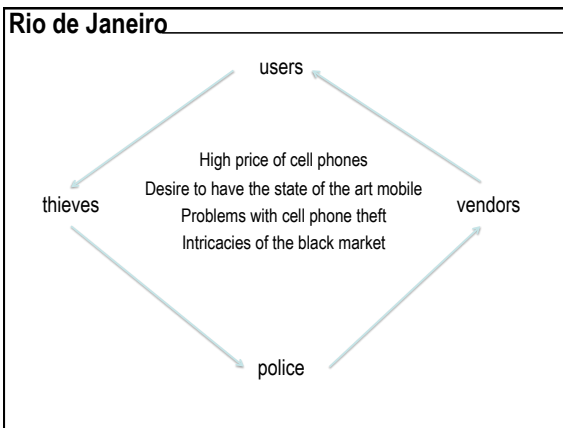
"The girl who lives upstairs, her husband is in prison, and frequently the pay phone rings, because he calls to talk, to know everything that is happening there."

Fashionably



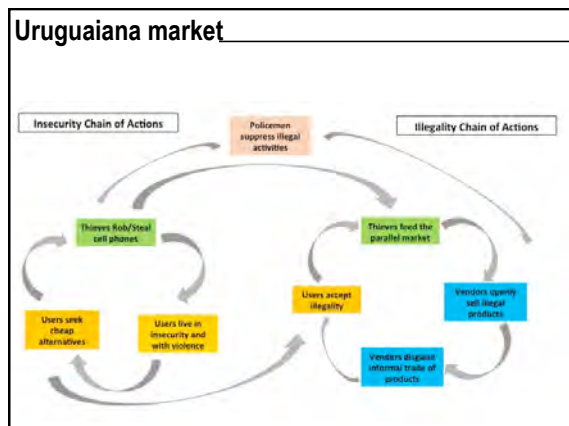
"She gave him that big ugly brick and he doesn't use it. He wants a cell phone, but a cute cell phone."

"It's from Motorola, they have it in pink, in many colors. If you have it, people think you are in better financial conditions. If you have the big brick, people even mock you."



2015

Pilot Study (15 interviews):
5 Vendors who sell generic / stolen cell phones
5 Consumers who use these phones
5 Rio city police (Guarda Municipal)



Insecurity cycle

Thieves rob/steal cell phones



Insecurity cycle

Users live in insecurity and with violence

"I had been using the cell phone for just a month; it was a Galaxy CS4 mini. Then, I was robbed again (...) I even lost pictures from a trip." (João, 27)

"It was an assault. They took my purse, and everything inside it, including the phone." (Manuela, 45).

Insecurity cycle

Users seek cheap alternatives



Insecurity cycle

Users seek cheap alternatives

"In the beginning, it worked. The camera was good. During the night, the camera didn't work so well as it did during the day, even using the flash... It had a flash. But I think the flash was only light; it didn't work well (laughs). Because at night with the flash the pictures should be good, right? But they were dark. And the touch [touchscreen] started to fail as well as the battery during the five months I had this phone (Jennifer, 34).

Illegality cycle

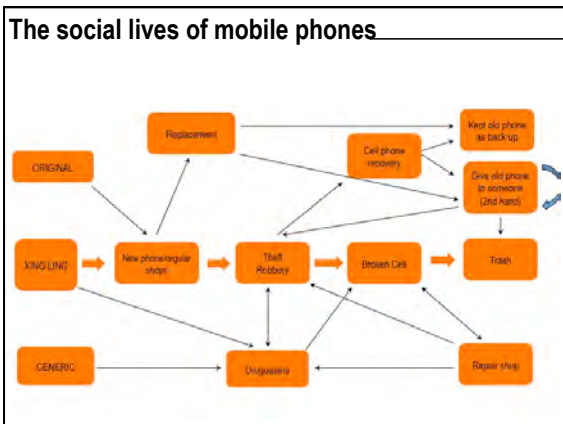
Thieves feed the black market

"We cannot prove it, but we suspect. Because of the prices... Cell phones that cost 2000 reais [Brazilian currency] in a regular store are sold for 400 reais. So we assume that the vendor pays no taxes, has no expenses [purchasing it], and [this is why] the price is lower" (Officer Lars, 49).

Illegality cycle

Thieves feed the black market

"Another day I was at Uruguiana, and then a couple approached me. A humble couple, right? From the East Zone [a lower income area in Rio de Janeiro]. He was from Bangu [a neighborhood in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro] and was looking to buying a phone. [Officer imitates the man's voice] "No... I've been told that here, in the camelódromo... [another name for the Uruguiana market]" Then I told him... The camelódromo is a little further away. Yes, there are cheaper phones, but the device you will buy won't have a receipt because most of them are illegal, stolen. [Officer imitates the man's voice] "Oh, but everybody buys them!"



Creative Appropriations
Low-income communities

Inverted cannibalism (Bar, Pisani, & Weber, 2007)

Creative Appropriations
Mobile Media Art

Giselle Beiguelman, WopArt, 2001

Creative Appropriations in Brazil
Mobile Media Art

- Lucas Bambozzi (Arte.Mov festival)
- Claudio Bueno
- Andrei Thomaz
- Cicero Silva (UNIFESP, São Paulo)
- Diana Domingues (UnB)
- Fabio Fon (UFRN)
- Giselle Beiguelman (USP)
- Gilberto Prado (USP)
- Marcelo Godoy (MobileFest)
- Marcus Bastos (PUC-SP)
- Martha Gabriel
- Paulo Hartmann (MobileFest)
- Lucia Santaella (PUC-SP)
- Silvia Laurentiz (USP-ECA)

Interviews by Adriana de Souza e Silva and Fernanda Duarte (2011-2013)

Mobile Media Art Scene
Topics

#1: Motivations
#2: Creative Processes
#3: Sponsorship
#4: Promotion

Data analysis by Cristiane S. Damasceno and Adriana de Souza e Silva (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring

Urban and cosmopolitan

Bruno Vianna, Invisíveis, 2007

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring

"The technology of mobile media for me, today, is way to go out on the streets, (...) to discuss urban spaces, the presence of the body in public spaces." (Claudio Bueno)

Claudio Bueno, 2011, Campo Minado

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring


"We started to explore another facet of mobile telephony, which is the social issue, users who use cell phones with no concern for privacy." (Fabio Fon)

Fabio Fon & Soraya Braz, 2009, Ceptas

#1 Motivations

Themes artists are exploring

"Increasingly the cell phone is no longer an urban remote control; it is the indication of a process of cyborgization that is irreversible." (Giselle Beiguelman)



Giselle Beiguelman & Fernando Velázquez, 2012, URnoHere

#2 Creative Processes

How artists are creating their art

International Collaborations



Mobile Fest & Waag Society, 2009, Gincana Global

#3 Sponsorship

Financial sponsors of this type of production

International funding

"Last year we got a grant from the Canadian government to promote exchange between Brazilian and Canadian artists. A group of Brazilian artists went to OCADE, and a group of Canadians came to Brazil to the MobileFest (...)" (Marcelo Godoy).



Rede Jovem, 2010, WikiMapas

#2 Creative Processes

How artists are creating their art


Difficulties

"Brazilians use the lack of resources as creativity" (Marcelo Godoy).

"We do not have the same access to production and financial resources as you have abroad. (...) But this lack of resources needs to be incorporated into your creative process. (...) In Brazil we do not have mechanisms to finance mobile media art as the film industry does." (Bruno Vianna).

#4 Promotion

How the artistic production circulate among a broader audience



Festivals (Arte.Mov, MobileFest, Nokia Trends)

"Arte.Mov has something that I find interesting. They are able to bring pieces developed in other parts of Brazil (Belém, Belo Horizonte, etc.) to Rio and São Paulo." (Andrei Thomaz)

MobileFest, 2010

#Conclusion

Brazilian Art?

"I think that working with sensorial issues is very Brazilian." (Diana Domingues)

Bruno Vianna: Nuvem (Laboratory of Rural Art and Technology)

#Conclusion

Brazilian Art?

Mobile art scene in Brazil:

- Urban
- Lack of resources = creativity, and leads to collaboration
- Artists are also professors, programmers
- Creative appropriation leads to the construction of hybrid spaces

Hybrid Spaces

- Mobile spaces
- Social use of location-aware technology
- Connected to the Internet



#Conclusion

Mobile Communication literature in developing countries:
Also focus on creative processes vs. M4D and resource constrained communities

Questions?

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