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

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%)*

Global South
Research foci
How low income and resource constrained populations appropriate and adopt technology for economic development (Donner, 2009). M4D (ICTD)
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 though: '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" (parallel market)

“Yes, I already had one [dánaš] (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...."
“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.”

“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/stole cell phones

Insecurity cycle
Users live in insecurity and with violence

Insecurity cycle
Users seek cheap alternatives

Insecurity cycle
Users seek cheap alternatives

Illegality cycle
Thieves feed the black market

Illegality cycle
Thieves feed the black market

“Another day I was at Uruguaiana, 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 Uruguaiana 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!”

“Another common situation involves people inside buses who are sitting by the window. The window is open, and individuals have their phones on their ear. And then, the criminal waits until the bus comes to a stop, [Officer imitates the voice] “No... I’ve been told that here, in the camelódromo...” 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!”

“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).
Illegality cycle
Vendors disguise informal trade of products

“They disguise themselves as technical support and are able to make the maintenance, restoration, unlocking, and sale of [illegal] devices” (Officer Blake, 44 years).

Interviewer: Have you ever had problems with inspection agents?
Vendor: They come sometimes... but they always tell us beforehand, right? That there is going to be an inspection, right?
Interviewer: And does someone benefit from giving you this information?
Vendor: Probably, right? We cannot cite names here.

The social lives of mobile phones
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 Santella (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 Vazña, _Arquiteto_, 2009

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring

"The technology of mobile media is for me, today, a way to go out on the streets. (...) Discussing urban spaces, the presence of the body in public spaces..." (Andrei Thomaz)

#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)

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring

Claudio Bueno, _Campo Minado_, 2011

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring

Fabio Fon & Soraya Braz, _Captas_, 2009

#1 Motivations
Themes artists are exploring

"The technology of mobile media is for me, today, a way to go out on the streets. (...) Discussing urban spaces, the presence of the body in public spaces..." (Andrei Thomaz)
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)

**#1 Motivations**
Themes artists are exploring

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).

**#2 Creative Processes**
How artists are creating their art

International Collaborations

“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)

**#3 Sponsorship**
Financial sponsors of this type of production

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**#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)

**#Conclusion**

Brazilian Art?

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

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