



# CHANGING THE STORY

## Filming the Margins: Documentary Film, Participation and the Poetics of Resistance in Contemporary Brazil

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## Chapter Eleven

### **Filming the Margins: Documentary Film, Participation and the Poetics of Resistance in Contemporary Brazil**

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#### **Introduction**

Documentary film offers a privileged space for the analysis and creation of participatory forms and processes mediated by images and sounds. This is as a result of a long tradition of this format in developing various modes of dealing with people, their lives, their stories and their relationships with the world, both ethically and aesthetically. This chapter serves as a synthesis of our efforts to position documentary within the realm of participatory arts, and specifically in their intersection with identity and resistance politics. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it seeks to discuss the emergence of documentary participatory filmmaking in Brazil, especially from the 1960s, and the development of identity issues as part of this process. In order to trace this emergence, we examine the work of 'mainstream' filmmakers, linked to *Cinema Novo*, also known as Modern Brazilian Cinema,<sup>i</sup> and then film projects that involve independent filmmakers working with underrepresented groups, such as women and black and indigenous communities, examining questions of intersectionality and how these relate to issues around political and cultural resistance. The study of these sets of films is directly connected to the realisation of documentary practices by one of the authors of this essay

(Sobrinho). Thus, this process serves to contextualise the second part of the chapter: a description and reflection upon the results of a participatory filmmaking project involving a group of young women from Brazil's northeast region, and specifically the municipal district of Codó in the state of Maranhão. This group faces double-weighted prejudice within Brazil's national imaginary, by being settled in one of the lowest-rated Human Development Index regions in the country and by being nationally known as 'the city of witchcraft', concentrating hundreds of Afro-Brazilian religious temples, and specifically those pertaining to *terecô*, a syncretic religion described in more detail below. Consequently, class and racial discrimination intersects with a structure of oppression and influences the construction of the 'imagined nation' in the region. At the same time, our study is also necessarily inflected by issues relating to gender.

### **Listening to our own Voices: the Emergence of Identity Construction and the Aesthetics of Resistance**

The main purpose of documentary production in Brazil, until the early 1960s, was certainly not directly linked to the intellectual struggles around issues of identity. However, documentary frequently reveals the core issues at stake in the identity politics of the day. In the early days of cinema in Brazil, during the silent period, non-whites, such as the indigenous *mestiços* and Afro-Brazilians, were generally excluded from the screen due to what producers saw as the potential shame of the country being regarded as a non-white nation by the West. When they were represented, they were invariably

portrayed as exotic. With the arrival of sound during the *Estado Novo* or New State dictatorship led by Getúlio Vargas (1937-1945), documentary film was dominated by the 'expository mode' (Nichols 1991), with the 'national' being translated into images and sounds in line with the dominant state ideology: Brazil was, so the story went, a multicultural country without social conflict and a paradise of racial democracy. 'Racial democracy' is an expression forged by dominant ideology to affirm that racism has no place in Brazil and where racial mixing has been deemed to be successful. The concept of racial mixing, or *mestiçagem*, took on positive tones with the publication in 1933 of US-trained sociologist Gilberto Freyre's monumental *Casa Grande y Senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves* 2010). The book at first received harsh reviews due to its positive defence of a mixed-race society, at a time when eugenics and calls for the 'whitening' of the Brazilian population continued to influence much conservative intellectual thought. Freyre's arguments were seized upon by President Getúlio Vargas and his populist New State politics and used as evidence to promote the idea of Brazil as a multicultural racial democracy. Freyre would later be criticised in equal measure, and particularly by Afro-Brazilian social movements, for his failure to acknowledge the extent of the violence of slavery and its impact on the social condition of black people, in the development of his arguments. However, there were many examples of documentary, particularly after the 1960s, that challenged this image of the nation, critiquing, not least, the concept of racial democracy. In the process, a distinctive Brazilian tradition of documentary filmmaking began to emerge.

With the release of *Aruanda* (1960), directed by Linduarte Noronha, a film which strongly influenced *Cinema Novo* filmmakers, the everyday life of marginalised communities in Brazil was presented on screen as a provocative critique of 'the nation'. *Aruanda* tells the story of Zé Bento and his family who are part of a *quilombo*, living a life detached from modern Brazil. *Quilombos* were spaces of resistance, where runaway slaves created autonomous communities. The subject matter of *Aruanda* contrasted radically with earlier documentaries and their silence on the subject of racial inequality. In *Aruanda*, for one of the first times in Brazil, 'the popular' (or ordinary people) was imagined as being predominantly black. For the generation of filmmakers coming of age in the 1960s, the representation of 'the popular' would become a dominant theme. However, with regard to *Aruanda*, although the film focuses on a black family, Noronha did not seek actively to develop a racial agenda in his documentary. It is important to point out here that at that time independent filmmakers, such as Noronha, had a political agenda focused predominantly on denouncing underdevelopment and its consequences in terms of the economic misery that affected the poorest citizens. Thus, the Afro-Brazilians we see in *Aruanda* were primarily included in order to support this agenda. These filmmakers were driven by the concept of the 'national-popular', which presented 'ordinary people' in such a way that the intellectual elites could foreground the issue of poverty, with the goal of raising awareness of class politics and bringing the oppressed to consciousness (Bernardet 2013).

In the films made as part of the *Cinema Novo* film movement, the 'popular' was filtered by images and sounds mediated through both observation and interaction, communicated, for the most part, by voice-over. These formal elements, together with the social analysis of the audiovisual material utilised in these films, signalled a radical change in the narrative treatment of everyday life, and paved the way for what came to be called 'the sociological model'. Here, the filmmaker turned his camera ('his', since he was invariably male) on the common people, while also strongly filtering and, indeed, skewing this 'reality' in order to fit with his thesis about the situation being filmed (Bernardet 2003). Here one could mention documentaries such as *Garrincha, alegria do povo* (*Garrincha: Hero of the Jungle*, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1962), *Romeiros da guia* (*Pilgrims of Guia*, Vladimir Carvalho and João Ramiro Mello, 1962), *Maioria Absoluta* (*Absolute Majority*, Leon Hirszman, 1964), *Integração Racial* (*Racial Integration*, Paulo César Saraceni 1964), *O Circo* (*The Circus*, Arnaldo Jabor, 1965) and *Viramundo* (Geraldo Sarno, 1965), among others. In such films, one finds the suggestion of immediate observation, dear to direct cinema, and the use of interviews and statements in dialogue with *cinema vérité* aesthetics. Such films would seem to point to a more 'participatory' rather than 'expository' mode of documentary. That said, the dominant mode remained expository, with filmmakers invariably insisting on the use of a 'voice of God' narrator to explain the images on screen. Such films frequently, and explicitly, explore the idea of national identity, focusing on the representation of the popular in order to construct a critical image of the nation. After the military *coup d'état* in 1964, which saw the armed forces, supported by the US, overthrow President João Goulart,

these practices and ideas were violently suppressed by the State, obliging filmmakers to resist and negotiate censorship, leading some to move from cinema to television.

In the first golden age of Brazilian television, during the 1970s, *Globo Shell Especial* (1971-1973) and *Globo Repórter* (from 1973) television programmes adopted cinematic strategies in conjunction with the so-called 'Modern Brazilian Cinema' in the non-fiction realm (with its focus on film language and independent production values, referred to earlier).<sup>ii</sup> Here one finds those grand themes related to questions of national identity that would dominate Brazilian art and thought until the 1980s, such as issues relating to gender and the indigenous experience: criticism of the nation; the denouncement of underdevelopment and the centrality of ordinary people to the life of the nation. This is remarkable, given the heavy censorship at this time. Many of the filmmakers involved in these programmes emerged from the *Cinema Novo*, and had strong links with the political Left. Here one could mention Eduardo Coutinho and João Batista de Andrade, for example. There were some famous examples of censorship, such as *Wilsinho Galiléia* (1978), by Joao Batista de Andrade, which was never screened. The film is a re-enactment of the tragic life of Wilsinho, who was transformed into a dangerous criminal by the age of 14 and eventually shot by the police. Such examples of censorship notwithstanding, many filmmakers were able to develop their work and screen it on the most powerful television channel in the country (Globo), creating a body of 'participatory' documentary films that

used interviews and testimony to criticise the political status quo (military dictatorship) and its consequences for life in Brazil.

Still in the 1970s, radical change was taking place both in terms of expression and content in documentaries and in identity politics. In 1975, Geraldo Sarno directed *Espaço Sagrado (Sacred Space)*, a film based on an investigation of *terreiros*, the sacred spaces for rituals in the Afro-Brazilian religion of *Candomblé*. Later, he went further in the process of documenting *Candomblé* with *laô. A iniciação num terreiro Gege Nagô (laô. Initiation in a Gege Nagô Temple, 1976)*. *laô* was a turning point in Sarno's career and, consequently, in the history of forms of representation of Afro-Brazilian heritage. Shifting away from the exterior gaze of the so-called 'sociological model', the filmmaker adopted a mixture of observation and participatory methods, inscribing himself into what we see on screen, with the camera and sound recorder pointed at him.

In the same decade, using 16 mm, Andrea Tonacci directed *Conversas no Maranhão (Conversations in Maranhão State, 1977-1981)*, which is a seminal work in the documentary field, particularly with regard to the performance of 'otherness'. The documentary captures the struggle for the right to ancient lands belonging to the Canela Apãniekra indigenous group, thus constituting a film-document-manifesto on the struggle for rights and the survival of these peoples. Although indigenous people had been recorded on film in Brazil as early as 1912, this film marked the first time a new point of view was offered:



a shift from the 'other' being the object to protagonist and subject of his or her own discourse.

With some exceptions, such as *A entrevista (The Interview, 1966)*, by Helena Solberg, a documentary about the ideas, desires, plans and dreams of the bourgeoisie, women did not generally appear on screen as protagonists in this period. It was not until the 1980s, during the so-called 're-democratization' of the country, which also saw a growth in new social movements and alliances between the State and NGOs, facilitated by the commercialisation and appropriation of analogue video technology, that one saw the emergence of feminist documentary filmmaking. At that time, in the feminist struggle for visibility and power, both women and men produced numerous videos that sought to challenge patriarchal social structures. Although Brazilian women filmmakers faced a relative delay in their struggle for representation on screen, they rapidly managed to inscribe intersectionality into their arguments against oppression: thus, gender, class and race were all seen as important and interrelated vectors in the construction of social hierarchies.

*Orí* (a Yoruba term meaning 'head'), directed by Raquel Gerber and released in 1989, was one of the most representative pieces of this moment. *Ori* bears witness to a decade of struggles by the black movement to reclaim, or impose, its identity in the context of Brazil's redemocratisation process post-1984. The film is narrated by Beatriz Nascimento, a black feminist writer and historian of the *quilombos*. The intellectual work of Beatriz Nascimento, which began in the 1970s, considers the contribution of Afro-Brazilians to the

cultural formation of the country. She was particularly frustrated by the historiographical vision of black Brazilians as mere slaves. Thus her research sparked a new understanding of *quilombos* as places of resistance, and how such cultural traditions could be witnessed in other contemporary spaces inhabited by Afro-Brazilians (Nascimento 2007). This was a central film in the development of our project in Codó, a city with a large black presence and historic *quilombos*, and which continues to suffer considerable discrimination. Screening the film to our participants during the development of our project had the surprising result of self-affirmation in them, due not least to the role of a black intellectual in the documentary, a domain heavily marked by the presence of white men.

In Brazil, independent video production vigorously emerged in the early 1980s and grew until the mid-1990s. This phenomenon embraced social movements, with a noticeable preference for documentaries in which forms of participation, dialogue, encounters and questions of identity all played a major role. Pluralism became the dominant discourse, with questions of gender politics, marginalisation, life in the favelas and the place of the periphery in everyday Brazilian life taking centre stage.<sup>iii</sup>

In Brazil, the ideology of whitening and the myth of racial democracy were aspirations historically constructed to erase the African heritage and the 'black stain of slavery'. They are responsible for the difficulty of a large portion of Afro-Brazilians in cultivating their self-esteem (Araújo 2004, p.25).

In many ways, Joel Zito Araújo sums up here the core issue at stake with regard to Brazilian national identity construction in the documentary tradition. Documentaries that value the relationship between the black population and

cinema, for the most part, position racial democracy as the key to denying reality. Racial democracy is presented as a myth that hides actual race relations, which are marked in actual fact by the oppression of the black population. This was a dominant feature of black social movements from the 1970s to 1980s. Looking at production from this period as a whole, one finds a great deal of political tension playing out in these films symbolically. Filmmakers explored the struggle for direct elections and redemocratisation (here one could mention videos by the audiovisual collective TV VIVA, for example), action by various other social movements, not least the black feminist movement (*Axé Project*, by feminist audiovisual collective COMULHER), as well as the celebrations around the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1988 (*Black Race*, Nilson Araújo) and the heated discussions that accompanied it on the creation of a new Constitution.

Finally, special mention must be given to the *Video Nas Aldeias* (Video in the Villages) project, which has been using film to advocate for change for indigenous communities continuously since 1986.<sup>iv</sup> The documentary *Vídeo na Aldeias* (*Video in the Villages*, 1989), summarises the principles of this emblematic project for Brazilian culture: to promote and to record important events and ceremonies, to exchange images among people, to initiate young people in the use of the camera, to provide a space for indigenous groups that already use video to exchange and edit their works and finally to encourage indigenous filmmakers to tell their own stories, in tune with contemporary practices of self-narrative. *Video nas Aldeias* has for some time been a source of inspiration for grass-roots social movements, both in Brazil and beyond,

seeking to make use of film to both document endangered culture and, increasingly in the Twenty-First Century, to denounce social injustice (Graham 2014).

As we have seen, the documentary production of the 1980s and 1990s cited here differed from broadcast TV production. Nonetheless, independent directors frequently aimed to broadcast their documentaries on television. This exhibition landscape has changed: screenings at film festivals have become possible, and the emergence of the internet has allowed for the appearance of other exhibition platforms. In other words, another audiovisual culture exists, making clear the passage from one cycle to another, from *Cinema Novo* to television, and from television to video, with a huge amount of material from different time periods now freely available for reuse on the internet. As a result of these developments, the participatory process in documentary, now more than at any other time in the history of film, has the potential to empower the historically silent and/or invisible people.

### ***A Little of Everything, Perhaps: Applying, Developing and Sharing a Participatory Methodology***

During 2017, we participated in a transnational project entitled *Troubling the National Brand and Voicing Hidden Histories*. On the Brazil leg of the project we worked with young people from a region of Brazil (Codó) whose community history and traditions arguably reject the ethos of national inclusion. These young people have in their daily lives access to technology

(television, the internet, social media such as Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook) and thus access to contemporary representations of the nation. Building upon their confidence in using social media in their daily lives, the plan was to work with Sobrinho's filmmaking experience to reflect on video upon the young women's 'fit' within both the traditions of their community and these national representations, and the space they have to support and challenge such representations. This would also build on Sobrinho's recent film work (*Diário de Exus/ Exu Diary*, 2014; *A Dança da Amizade: Histórias de Urucungos, Puítas e Quijengues/The Dance of Friendship*, 2016; *A Mulher da Casa do Arco-íris/ The Rainbow House Woman*, 2018) which focuses on marginalised Afro-Brazilian communities and cultural practices.

Codó is the fifth largest municipality in the state of Maranhão, with a population of around 118 000. It is home to a large number of *quilombos*, communities originally set up by fugitive slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and as a result its racial and ethnic make-up is more Afro-Brazilian than that of other north-eastern states, with the exception of Brazil's most 'African' state, Bahia. As a result of changes made to the Brazilian Constitution in 1988 and the setting up of the Palmares Foundation, *quilombos* can now gain official recognition and access to federal sources of support; there are 682 officially recognised *quilombos* in the state of Maranhão alone (*O Estado* 2017), but prejudice against such communities, which have by their very nature been marginalised within Brazilian society, continues to be rife. They constitute some of the most economically deprived regions in Brazil, and while there is a clear distinction drawn between these

spaces and the *urban* area of Codó, from where our participants were drawn, the region is often broadly prejudiced against in the national imaginary as a result of the presence of so many *quilombos* in the region and their pronounced African heritage.

Many young people in Codó find themselves doubly prejudiced against by the municipality's close association with *terecô* (Ferretti 2003), a syncretic religion that mixes indigenous, Christian and some African rituals. Its identity is more related to Bantu culture (Angola, Cabinda) and its rituals are mostly conducted in Brazilian Portuguese. Usually, the fathers and mothers of saints in *terecô* are also witchdoctors. Some of them, called *tereçozeiros*, have become famous for carrying out magical works, requested by clients keen for revenge, or politicians prepared to pay large sums of money to gain power. As a result, the city of Codó has gained notoriety as a 'land of witchcraft'. *Terecô* first emerged among black communities in Codó, and in particular in Santo Antonio dos Pretos, an ancient *quilombo* just a few minutes from the city centre.



**Fig. 11.1. Terecô ritual practice (Photograph by Gilberto Alexandre Sobrinho).**

The choice of community to work with on this project was partly guided by our NGO project partners, Plan International, a development and humanitarian organisation that is tasked with advancing the rights of children and young people, and promoting equality for girls. Founded over 75 years ago and present in 50 developing countries, Plan is one of the oldest and largest children's development organisations in the world. Plan has been active in Brazil since 1997, working with young people on consciousness-raising and empowerment projects that focus on developing financial survival skills, and campaigns to improve gender equality and reduce violence against young women in particular. They are very active in Codó, where they have an office and staff available to support a project such as ours, as well as contacts

within the community. Plan were responsible for recruiting the young people (young women, in this case) to work with us: our participants all had previous experience of working with Plan on personal development and/or leadership courses set up through their secondary schools.

Plan also provided us with an audio-visual space set up and funded by them at a local municipal school, which comprised of a room with sofas, standard audio-visual equipment (but no internet connection) and the all-too-important air conditioning. The space itself was indicative of the kinds of problems related to supporting audio-visual education that NGOs and local government frequently encounter: while the donation by Plan of the infrastructure was certainly generous and a potential asset for the otherwise very poorly equipped school, a lack of personnel support meant that it was in practice hardly ever used.

But by far the most important 'resource' that Plan contributed to the project was the time and input of senior staff member and Afro-Brazilian feminist activist Viviana Santiago, Head of Gender at the NGO who, together with Inés Soria-Donlan, a participatory arts practitioner based in Leeds, UK, worked with the young women in a workshop format to encourage them to reflect on their identity, relationship with Codó, and so on. The creation of trust and mutual respect was a particularly significant part of the process of producing a video response, and given the importance of these workshops for both team-building and fostering a sense of self-confidence in the young women in terms



of understanding the importance of their own voices and views, some of the footage of these workshops is captured in the final video.

Thus, in the video we produced, rather than purely reflecting on the historical, racial and religious questions highlighted above in relation to Codó, as we had anticipated when applying for funding, the young women were much more concerned to share details of their everyday lives: hence the title of the video they chose: *Um Pouco de Tudo, Talvez* (*A Little of Everything, Perhaps*). The young women were at pains to emphasise that they liked Codó and their community, but most of them expressed a desire to leave, through frustration at a lack of opportunities, resources and access to higher education or well-paid jobs.

The video opens with filmmaker Sobrinho on board a flight from Campinas (a relatively wealthy, 'white' city) to Teresina, capital of the north-eastern state of Piauí and home to the closest airport to Codó. The first image is notably a breaking of the fourth wall, as Sobrinho stares silently and directly at the camera. It then follows his journey by car to Codó itself, showing images captured on a mobile phone. All the while the filmmaker, in voiceover, reflects on the significance of the journey, hinting in his commentary at the original motivation behind the choice of Codó and demonstrating the extent to which the filmmaking journey took a rather different course than expected.

The opening sequence, with its focus on the filmmaker, also demonstrates the extent to which Sobrinho did not shy away from assuming an overall lead in

the participatory process. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the project constituted a personal journey for him too, as the son of north-eastern migrant workers who moved to the centre-south region out of the kind of necessity described by the young women in workshop discussions and on-screen interviews. This explains Sobrinho's decision to capture himself on screen in the opening sequence, as it serves as a point of identification with the young women from Codó, on both a physiognomical level, and in formal terms within the film itself. After his filmed 'selfie', the focus briefly shifts to Sobrinho's choice of in-flight reading: Judith Butler's *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable* (2009), thereby signalling an academic, as well as a personal curiosity driving his journey to the north east and his input in the project. It is worth noting here that Sobrinho has documented in his films little-known Afro-Brazilian cultural practices in the city of Campinas, interior of the state of São Paulo, where his focus is often oral history and the women who have key roles in keeping both these practices and their histories alive.

Both the facilitators and the participants were keen to demonstrate in their film how much could be achieved by using mixed and, in some cases, highly accessible forms of media that they might be able to produce themselves on a future occasion, including photographs (digital and hard copies), snippets of conversations recorded on phones, and images captured on Go-Pros. After screening excerpts from a range of Brazilian documentaries in the workshops, a focal point of discussion was the effect of separating sound from image, and the video response they produced reflects these discussions. A particularly poignant sequence of the video, for example, shows pleasant and seemingly

innocuous stills and some moving images of the town of Codó, with a particular focus on house fronts, while the accompanying sound captures the 'hidden' stories of sexual harassment and threats to their personal safety, predicated on their gender, to which they are regularly subjected in their day-to-day lives.



**Fig. 11.2. Shot of a house front (Still from *Um pouco de tudo, talvez*).**

The video response includes footage shot in Codó by Sobrinho, in the company of the young women, of popular cultural and religious manifestations such as *bumba-meu-boi*, a festival linked to harvest which is particularly famous in this region, and a *terecô* religious service, but these take a back seat to the faces and voices of the young women themselves and the

expression of their own desires, dreams, sense of agency, future, and so on. Thus, almost half of the running time is taken up with ‘talking head’ sequences involving four of the five young women, echoing both the work of one of Brazil’s foremost documentary filmmakers, Eduardo Coutinho, and in particular his final documentary *Ultimas Conversas* (*Last Conversations*, 2015), which had been viewed in its entirety and widely commented on by the young women during the first workshop, as well as Day Rodrigues’s *Mulheres Negras, Projetos de Mundo* (*Black Women, World Projects*) which, with its frank exposition of everyday racism and calls for resistance as related by a group of inspirational black women, resonated particularly strongly with the participants when they viewed it in the workshop.<sup>v</sup>



**Fig. 11.3.** The five project participants from Codó.(Still from *Um pouco de tudo, talvez*).

In order to make effective use of the aforementioned mixed-media materials, we felt that it was important to acquire the services of an experienced editor, and thus a certain proportion of the research budget was set aside for this. This part of the project was conducted separately from the participants, but this was more for logistical reasons (the remoteness of Codó and the cost of travelling there from Sobrinho's home and university in Campinas). The young women were included, however, in discussions regarding dissemination and the use of film and video as an advocacy tool was discussed in the preparatory workshops. On their suggestion, the film was screened in June 2018. There follows a report of the event, by Anselmo Costa (Director of the Codó branch of Plan):

On the afternoon of 15 June 2018, an exhibition and Q and A session of the documentary *A Little of Everything, Perhaps* was held at the Federal Institute of Science and Technology Education of Maranhão, Campus Codó (IFMA). The event was attended by students in the first year of the Agricultural Technical Course, which is part of the High School curriculum. The event was coordinated by Ronald Rodrigues and Leinad Alves, both from Plan Brazil. Also present were two young women who are protagonists in the documentary: Isabela and Alana. The objective of this event was to present the documentary to teenagers and young people in order to encourage the participation of this public and engage them in discussion of human rights issues and political participation, demonstrating the creation of materials that show their reality through creative forms of audio-visual production. [...]

The public watched attentively, laughing occasionally, as if they did not expect to hear some common expressions from their daily life. Afterwards a Q and A session was held with the protagonists. They discussed how they felt about participating in the documentary. Isabela said she did not encounter many difficulties and talked about how to mobilise other adolescents and young people to organise and claim their rights [...]. Isabela was excited to talk about the situation of inequality and violence girls still face. She reported a case of a friend who had recently been the victim of sexual violence and how boys and girls should learn about gender equality. Alana spoke of the difficulties of being a young woman from the poor suburbs, how opportunities are denied and how showing this reality to others is something she

considers important. She commented on her experience of participating in the documentary and learning from the other girls.

## **Conclusion**

Portable cameras and sound recorders, first in video and later with the resources of digital technology, have become the trusted tools of directors and a variety of social actors in their desire to share narratives. As a result, erstwhile invisible stories and underrepresented subjects have gradually started to occupy public spaces and images. As we have endeavoured to illustrate, there has been a historical struggle in Brazil to make invisible subjects visible and owners of their own discourse, where politics, communication and aesthetics converge. Alana, Isabela, Ihandra, Natália and Bianca, the five young women involved in the film, not only took part in the project, but constructed the film with us and brought identity issues to the forefront of their discussions about their lives, made up of a combination of politics, affection and resistance.

In the shift from 'sociological documentary' in the 1960s to documentary that defends identity issues, especially from the 1980s onwards, NGOs and the State have worked in partnership with filmmakers with a considerable emphasis on making vocal historically silenced voices. As part of the wider project we were involved in, we too had such a partnership. Here we were involved with a transnational network that included participants from similarly marginalised backgrounds in India and South Africa. Thus, we explored how participatory arts and documentary have become a way of understanding a

reality of 'indignation and hope' (Castells 2017, p.94), a reality that affects the everyday lives of all project participants, and how this is mediated by images and sounds.

In conclusion, we can think that the mixture of critical studies on film and identity in the realm of Brazilian documentary, matched by an artistic practice in the same field, gave us a solid basis to propose a creative, poetic activity that combined empowerment and the construction of visual images. This resulted, rather unexpectedly, in a very complex form of resistance. Here, the challenge was to transpose a theoretical/practical background (cultural studies and filmmaking) to an unknown context (Codó). The strategies of living and sharing knowledge quickly established productive synergies of meanings for all of us. Our film captures subjects who have been silenced by history, and seeks to depict them, as far as possible, on their own terms. The documentary images in this film, which register our particular participatory approach to filmmaking, also participate, in their own way, in the creation of social bonds and evidence the need to actively work with, and incorporate, the everyday voices of marginalised people into the political and aesthetic strategies that deal with their struggles and their survival.

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<sup>i</sup> According to Ismail Xavier (2006), Modern Brazilian Cinema was marked by a shift towards auteurism, a focus on the language of cinema and independent production values, and is typified by the work of *Cinema Novo* director Glauber Rocha and his manifesto *Estética da Fome* (An Aesthetics of Hunger, 1965). Issues relating to identity were important to Cinema Novo: it ultimately marked the first time that Afro-Brazilians were present in fiction films and documentaries, and the introduction of a group of black actors and actresses in a film context. Here, it is worth highlighting the figure of the actor and director Zózimo Bulbul, who directed, among other films, the short film *Alma no olho* (1974). The film dates from after the demise of *Cinema Novo*, but it fits into Modern Brazilian Cinema as envisaged by Xavier.

<sup>ii</sup> *Globo Shell Especial* was short-lived and served as a kind of pilot to the long-running *Globo Repórter* series. It is worth highlighting the first phase of the latter series, from 1973 to 1982, when the series displayed a format similar to film documentaries, in terms of rhythm, language and thematic depth, with episodes lasting around 45 minutes. See *Memoriaglobo* 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> Some of the feminist videos produced during this period can be accessed in the PUC-SP library (<http://www.pucsp.br/biblioteca>). Jacira Melo, Maria Angelica Lemos, Márcia Meireles, Rita Moreira e Silvana Afram are some of the feminist videomakers referred to above. Another feminist website with historical video recordings is <http://comulher.wixsite.com/comulher>. Similarly, <http://www.cultne.com.br/eng/> is a very important repository of recordings and reports about black culture in Brazil.

<sup>iv</sup> The following website offers full information about this project: <http://www.videonasaldeias.org.br/2009/index.php?>. There is also a VOD web platform: <http://videonasaldeias.org.br/loja/>

<sup>v</sup> The first film to be screened at the workshop was the aforementioned *Alma no olho* (Zozimo Bulbul), which had a significant impact on the participants. While it is not necessarily borne out in the video response, interestingly the workshops revealed the young women's confidence in identifying with Brazil's African heritage.