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## Lives that matter: the sensitive and political dimension of self-representation in audiovisual

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## Abstract

The present work seeks to understand how the residents of Terra Firme neighborhood, on the outskirts of Belém, capital of the State of Pará, seize the narrative of the mini-documentary *Poderia ter sido você*, produced by the alternative media collective Tela Firme, after the slaughter in 2014. The video weaves a counternarrative, by recreating a reality shared tragically by the residents, seeking to awaken in them identification, in contrast to the hegemonic and stigmatizing representation of the neighborhood and its residents, which circulated massively in the media discourse at the time of the slaughter. The mini-documentary is part of a vigorous audiovisual production movement that has emerged in the Brazilian peripheries since the last decade, which goes beyond the artistic dimension and takes on political contours, in which self-representation emerges as a central idea. These productions seek to restore the speech historically denied to this portion of the population in the public space. The research has as its starting point the intersubjective dimension of experience in the production of meanings in this context of urban violence. Qualitative in nature, the research combines participant observation, from an autoethnographic perspective and interviews with neighborhood residents, members of the collective that produced the video and mothers of young people murdered in the slaughter. It was investigated to what extent these subjects recognize themselves and see their reality projected in the narrative of the mini-documentary and whether it can displace the gaze they have of themselves, against the hegemonic representations of media discourse. Therefore, what was realized is that the audiovisual production of *Poderia ter sido você*, stands out as an instrument of production and discursive positions of the Collective Tela Firme before the slaughters that occurred in the outskirts of Belém in 2014, in which residents recognize themselves.

### Keywords

2014 slaughter in Belém; Coletivo Tela Firme; Audiovisual peripheral; Self-representation; Intersubjectivity.

## Introduction

On November 5th, 2014, the population of Belém woke up under the sign of fear. From the night to the early morning, information about serial murders that had occurred in several peripheral neighborhoods between the end of November 4th and the dawn of November 5th was announced through social networks. Within only four hours nine people had been murdered; two more deaths would be confirmed later. The serial killings occurred in retaliation against the murder of the military police officer Antônio Marcos da Silva Figueiredo, known as Cabo Pet, who was head of militia force in Guamá and Terra Firme, that is, the two of Belém's largest suburbs. He also was an owner of a security camera company in Guamá, a peripheral neighborhood. According to witnesses, Cabo Pet used to threaten those who refused to install the cameras. The real call to war from Police officials, which represented the initial killing spree on the night of November 4th – "A police officer was killed! There will be bloodshed in the suburb area".

There have been five large-scale slaughter in the Metropolitan Region of Belém (RMB) since the 1990s, and all of them with proven militia participation (Ferreira Junior, 2019, p. 42), these are: Tapanã slaughter, in 1994; the Paar slaughter in 1995; Icoaraci slaughter, in 2011; Belém slaughter, in 2014 (the focus of this work); the RMB slaughter, the Condor slaughter, in 2017 and the Guamá slaughter, which took place in May last year, in which 11 people were killed<sup>1</sup>. Data were extracted from two main sources: the final report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry established in the State Legislative Assembly to investigate death squads and militias in the State of Pará (Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Pará [ALEPA], 2015)<sup>2</sup> and Report on the situation of cases of slaughter and extermination of young black people in the state of Pará, from the Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil [OAB] (2017).<sup>3</sup>

The particular slaughter carried out in these two peripheral neighborhoods of Belém, known as Terra Firme and Guamá, resulted in the great extermination of young people who lived in those low-income suburbs from Belém and it is far from being an isolated event. On the contrary, it has many features in common with countless other slaughters not only in the capital of Pará but in several others in Brazil. According to Rodrigo Peixoto (2015), not only impunity, but there are many other common features related to the slaughters and one of them is linked to the Military Police private interests and a spearhead of repression. Based on the author's view, the targets of this repression, however, are selective, especially because of historical marks of violent actions of the State in Brazil with respect to racism, particularly in Pará. Thus, "Understanding racism as a part of Brazilian reality represents an essential step towards dealing with the problem of violent State intervention by Military Police" (2015, p. 2).

Here, we seek to understand the video as a record of the sensitivity against the hegemonic order of representation in which, as Claudine Haroche (2008) postulated, the sensitivity has gotten autonomy and has become sensation. "In advanced capitalism, technological transformations have resulted in inattention, narrowing of consciousness, and lack of symbolization of feelings, reducing themselves in sensations, which brings individualities into the order of the body" (p. 16, emphasis added by the author). Based on the author's idea, it is a matter of a world marked by the tyranny of visibility, where there is no relation between the registers of seeing and feeling. In this sense, one can say that there is a large-scale

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<sup>1</sup> While this research was in progress, another barbaric slaughter took place in the Guamá neighborhood in May 2019. It took place in a neighborhood bar called "Bar da Wanda" where a party was taking place, but 7 hooded men arrived shooting at everyone present. Some people who were at the party ran, jumped the wall, but 11 people had no opportunity and were killed, among them six were women and five men. Images of the bodies stretched out and bloodied on the ground were coldly circulated on social networks and in message groups. (Portal G1.PA, online, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved April 15, 2021 from: <http://www.alepa.pa.gov.br/multimidia/anexo/04.12.2018/ef8a83d-9137846c2bd44ce7ff3d2b105.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved April 15, 2021 from: <http://www.oabpa.org.br/index.php/component/phocadownload/file/349-relatorio-chacinas-dh-oab>.

anthropological transformation, that is, the growing exteriorization of the subject corresponds to your inner impoverishment. It is a world that generates uncontrolled individuality, “which is constituted as the counterpart of the increase in inequality, injustice and indifference” (2008, p. 15).

Based on Haroche’s idea, it can be stated that the emergence of the mini-documentary called “Poderia ter sido você”, (in English “It could have been you”) produced by Tela Firme group after the slaughter in 2014, is linked to an extreme moment of naturalization of humiliation, violence and denial of rights and, at worst, the denial of the own right to life in Terra Firme suburb, a peripheral neighborhood, or in others which are located in low-income suburbs from Belém. Another highlight of this is a set of audiovisual narratives that has a great boost in the country since the last decade, in different formats and platforms, produced by groups from neighborhoods located in low-income suburbs, known as “Audiovisual productions from the periphery”, “Cinema of the periphery”, among other designations (Zanetti, 2008, 2010). Taking into account the productions above and the author’s view, it can be said that the logic of the slum as a “media product” is inverted, in other words, the subjects those who live in those spaces in large cities are represented from the look the media industries take at them, and not from their own perspective.

In addition to the real conditions of existence (associated with the economic, social and cultural dimensions), it is noted that there is also a fundamental aspect at stake in understanding low-income territories: the type of representation built around them, and the way in which they are represented in the public sphere, mainly through the media (Zanetti, 2008, p. 4).

Taking into account the Social Sciences and Communication field the author also states that the concept of “peripheral urbanization” must be understood in a wider way, that means, it is not being restricted to geographical and social aspects. Instead, it is embedded in a symbolic dimension which is linked to discourse, representations and imaginary. Audiovisual productions from low-income suburbs, in the author’s view, represents the expression of this discursive conflict, or struggle for representations, which is established in the sphere of public visibility, motivated not only by the empowerment of these subjects, but also by acknowledgment and social acceptance, as reported by Honneth (2003). It also can be seen as a form of political participation that is guided by the right to “self-representation” and “possibility of individuals and groups from peripheral areas to exercise greater control over their own representations” (Honneth, p. 8).

The research sought to understand the way in which the insiders from Terra Firme neighborhood perceive the narrative of the mini-documentary “Poderia ter sido você”, produced from the perspective of self-representation and its connection to the tragic slaughter experience, which represented a extreme moment in a place where the presence of intensive violence in daily life is not new. It was also asked if the narrative constructed in the video allows them to open up a wider lens on the world, in contrast to hegemonic representations of media discourse. The analysis also articulates with the observations shrouded in the process of the research, considering the authorial voice, that is, the researcher’s influence on research because of his experience as a cultural member since he was born, which allows him to better understand this stigma, promoting an autoethnographic dimension, which helped him make sense of themselves and others in different cultural contexts (Chang, 2008).

Based on the author’s experience alongside data from his master’s thesis, this paper<sup>4</sup> was made possible and the autoethnography was one approach that has shown to be appropriate and right. This choice is part of a wider methodological perspective known as participant observation, which is based on

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<sup>4</sup> Master’s dissertation thesis entitled “It could have been you: Self-representation, sensitive and inter-subjective dimension of violence in Terra Firme neighborhood, in Belém”, defended on July/2020 at the Graduate Program in Communication, Culture and Amazon (PPGCOM/UFGA), under the orientation of the teacher, Rosaly de Seixas Brito, co-author of this paper.

ethnography, in which the researcher not only participates but also takes part of the studied scene, which enables the participant to observe it, as Magnani (2002) explains, “outsider and long-distanced view”, contrasting “insider and close-up view”. However, this does not exempt him from a critical view of the studied object, combined with theoretical dialogue and conversation with the interlocutors, the research subjects, to unveil socially established meanings.

Besides the participant observation carried out from an autoethnographic perspective, semi-structured interviews were also carried out, with some questions about socioeconomic data to better understand the characteristics of each interviewer. Three different field notes were produced, the first one was directed to different age insiders, including a police officer who lives in Terra Firme neighborhood; the second one addressed insiders from the Tela Firme group, and the last one addressed the victims’ families. Considering all the three groups, we sought to understand the way they perceive the phenomenon of urban violence in general and, in particular, the experience of the slaughter in its multiple dimensions and ways of subjective and intersubjective influence. On another level, the interviewees were asked about: 1) how they perceive the representations that circulate about the neighborhood and its insiders in the hegemonic media systems and 2) to what extent they saw themselves or not as being part of the narrative of the mini-documentary *Poderia ter sido você*.

At first, the field research would be carried out based on a focus group composed of insiders from neighborhoods, who would watch the video together and then discuss it, which would happen in March 2020. However, the country was surprised by the harsh reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the new coronavirus. Most people who were contacted before the interview gave up participating in the face-to-face focus group. All of them had to retire at home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, keeping themselves safe, following the guidance of public health measures.

In this sense, we concluded that the only viable way to collect data would be through interviews carried out by Whatsapp application, since it is remote and easily accessible to the participants already articulated for the focus group. Thus, individual interviews were then carried out with thirteen participants, five residents from Terra Firme neighborhood, two young members of the Cine Clube TF Project, an audiovisual exhibition project in the neighborhood, three members of Tela Firme group, a police officer and two family members of the victims from the slaughter in 2014 – among the last two, one was made face-to-face and the other by Whatsapp. Some data were sent to all participants, that is, all of them received the video “Poderia ter sido você”, produced by Tela Firme group, and some images from the newspaper “O Liberal”, one of the most important newspaper of Pará, with great circulation in Belém, with respect to the slaughter in 2014. The age-group of interviewees varies between 19 and 60 years. Nine of them are aged between 19 and 32, and can therefore be considered “young people”.

This introductory part of the article also presents three other topics. The first one recovers the context of emergence of the independent audiovisual production group, its role developed in the low-income suburbs, which brings an understanding of it as part of a wider movement of struggle for self-representation in Brazilian peripheral neighborhoods. From data collection, the following topic presents the way in which the video “Poderia ter sido você” was perceived by the research participants. Finally, some conclusive notes are outlined on some central aspects found by this research.

## Tela Firme group: self-representation of people from low-income suburbs

Tela Firme group stands out for being an alternative media in the peripheral areas. It emerged shortly after the slaughter in 2014. Its initial purpose was to produce a counter-narrative about the tragedy, which gained contours of spectacularization in the hegemonic media of Belém. After that, it has grown in popularity because of the production of the mini-documentary called *Poderia ter sido você* interpreted

by young people from the suburbs, representing young people killed in the slaughters that took place in Belém, Icoaraci and Santa Isabel, between 2011 and 2014.

The audiovisual production brings the immediate demands of the community, echoing residents' voice in an inside-out relationship. Such conceptions are acknowledged in the audiovisual practices of Tela Firme insiders, which constitute a discursive action that potentially has a great power of social transformation, becoming an important instrument to reach public visibility through its narratives.

In a relational and intersubjective process of communication with the insiders, Tela Firme group shows the particularities of the low-income suburbs as well as evidence of a positive identity through audiovisual practice. Peruzzo (2009, p. 132) argues that the alternative means "represent a counter-communication, [...] elaborated within the scope of popular movements and communities". Tela Firme is composed mainly of young people who reflect on the social problems of the low-income suburb, and thus start from the concept of alternative popular communication, articulating singularities from other angles, such as content, format, ownership, level of participation popular, the target audience that becomes the issuer, the purpose that moves it and the language (Peruzzo, 2009).

All data collected, the videos produced by hand, became audiovisual material published on social networks (YouTube<sup>5</sup> and Facebook<sup>6</sup>). The expression of peripheral culture is essential in audiovisual production, as it stands out as a reorganizing instrument of the territory, composing itself as a counter-narrative, in which there is the creation of networks of political and cultural dialogue that contradict hegemonic structures. Based on Wilq (2014, p. 14), the audiovisual practice in the low-income suburbs is constituted as "[...] an instrument of change in the city, an instrument for creating networks of political and cultural dialogue, articulating a posture of struggle for classes, sometimes seeking insertion, although slightly, into the struggle for meanings".

The author emphasizes that the audiovisual from low-income suburbs appears as a social practice that in its form is developed through art and the exercise of language. In any case, the idea of "[...] our reality represented by ourselves is constantly placed as the agenda for action, pointing above all to a cultural dispute for representation." (Wilq, 2014, p.17).

These kinds of actions produced by Tela Firme group help to combat stigma against people who live in the low-income suburbs as well as fight against racism, increasing the self-esteem of this population, but they also seek to counteract the media's narratives about violence (Rocha, 2011). For the author, actions by groups that work in these suburbs gain legitimacy to speak publicly about their community. Such legitimacy results from the counter-narrative that the young people from Tela Firme group do when they showed, through audiovisual production, the cultural and social representations of Terra Firme suburb, the circuits of a way of life that can only be seen in the daily lives of those who live in the low-income suburbs of Belém.

Souza states that the debate on cultural policy points to a double aspect related to audiovisual production from low-income suburbs. On the one hand, it is guided by the appreciation of both suburb cultures and its new agents and protagonists. On the other hand, the changes caused by digital technology play an important role in the expanded circulation of cultural and symbolic goods. Therefore, the changes resulting from new communication technologies cannot be neglected. Tela Firme's audiovisual production highlights Terra Firme suburb as a place of identity.

Such community identity can be identified both as an origin and as one of the consequences of the receptivity that all production perceived as "peripheral" has had on the part of the hegemonic channels of the media, and society in a wide sense, in the form of several other segments such as the academia and the government. They are, at the same time, "your own representatives", "representative of others", and

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved June 23, 2019 from: <https://www.facebook.com/telaфирme>

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved June 23, 2019 from: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqWGBbmj6LcEZlp\\_2pcFEA/about](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqWGBbmj6LcEZlp_2pcFEA/about)

“who are represented”, as far as they produce representations of their territories and others; and self-representations of themselves, and of the other inhabitants of the communities where they pass, assuming alternately the roles of authors, characters and promoters of the works. By appropriating internet platforms to disseminate their production, making it public, they are automatically inserting themselves not only as authors but also as sources, into the memorial of media productions that this network configures. (Santos, 2014, p. 201).

While the motivation of audiovisual production is strongly linked to a personal desire of the filmmakers, and bears the marks of their subjectivity, on the other hand, it expresses a feeling loaded with a sense of community and territorial identity (Santos, 2014). Zanetti (2010) points out that the audiovisual production of groups promotes a reflection of self-recognition from the place. According to the author, these are civil society initiatives that resort to the audiovisual as an instrument of resistance and opposition to the hegemonic version of the events that concern them. Moreover, the author understands that the audiovisual production made by groups is constituted as an onslaught,

[...] in a discourse which suburbs and favelas spaces are appreciated. This appreciation emerges from the way of speaking of some participants (“real” or fictional) who are insiders or outsiders of peripheral territories, value their roots, their affective bonds with the place, the daily activities of work and leisure. (Zanetti, 2010, p. 75).

For Souza (2013), audiovisual production reinforces and expands the importance of documentary as a cultural artifact and promotes new arrangements in its practice. This allows young people to approach an already traditional language, recreate different rules about document practices and formats, and promote the collective nature of activities. Many actions practiced in peripheral space get young people from the Tela Firme group mobilized. Without having professional equipment for this purpose, but with a camera in hand and a microphone, so-called “technology of the possible”, the group is organized by insiders using the tools they have.

As Aderalto (2017, p. 2) argues “the audiovisual experiences allowed these young people to redefine the meaning of the urban landscape, while they broke with the institutional language that conceives them only as managed people”. Thus, in the audiovisual space, Tela Firme group pressures the State to demand immediate actions capable of facing the “killing spree” of young black people on the peripheral suburbs of Belém as well as denouncing the stigmatized image of such suburbs, with special focus on violent events and deaths.

The young people from Terra Firme neighborhood also use this resource as a “cry for freedom” from a suburban space stigmatized as violent, making the opportunity to show their voice impossible, with no opportunity of showing their representation, their cultural part as well as their diversity, through the media. The idea of visibility is also triggered when what is proposed are actions in peripheral neighborhoods (and their insiders), with their symbolic projection of public visibility. For Claudine Haroche, “visibility is presented as a synonym of legitimacy” (Haroche, 2005, p. 35).

The audiovisual production from peripheral groups, based on Souza’s idea (2013), evidences a dispute over what needs visibility, in which spaces, people and experiences become raw material for the construction of knowledge and representation. For him, if the hegemonic productions of television and cinema depend on the prevalence of sociocultural representations that form a common social reality, so cinema from low-income suburbs needs different methods of elaborating the experience with the purpose of being seen in all its diversity instead of a complete homogeneous production such as appears in the hegemonic representations.

For Batista (2020), a member of the group, “Tela Firme group exists due to self-representation, in opposition to the hegemonic narrative of the mass media, whose main objective is profit, and our intention is to be a voice in the peripheral territory in order to denounce injustice and publicize the beauties on the

low-income suburbs.” (personal interview)<sup>7</sup>.

Aderaldo (2017) argues that invisibility is one of the factors that led many young people, especially those who have more education or participation in social movements, to organize themselves around groups focused on independent audiovisual production, that is, acquisition of knowledge that goes beyond the scope of the Third Sector organizations. According to the author, in the context of corporate media, the concept of peripheral areas is usually well-known as settled emerging areas. This view is giving rise to new representations.

According to the researcher’s view (2017), the low-income suburb areas have identified flexible processes in which people and places are connected by unequal access to rights. In his view, the audiovisual experience allowed these young people to redefine the importance of the urban landscape, breaking with the institutional language, which is understood by them as the taught disciplines. Based on the researcher’s view, the meaning of “low-income suburb and slum, so-called *favela* in Brazil”, changes depending on the context in which the words are used. “While some policymakers use the term ‘low-income suburbs’ to refer to deprived and violent places, a rapper uses the same words to denote terms such as struggle, honor or resistance” (Aderaldo, 2017, p. 3).

For Belletati (2008), collective audiovisual claims bring significant possibility to launch an initiative in relation to peripheral community representation, being recognized by these actions. The people who live in these spaces, as the author stated, are perceived by ‘common sense’ as susceptible to the representations they are embedded, become policymakers, thus they communicate only what they think is needed through the audiovisual media

The productions of Tela Firme group are based on discontent with the lack of policies on the part of the State and the questioning against the hegemonic media. Belletati (2008) clarifies that these configurations are not limited to the dispute over the constitution of representation, but are an act of hope and indignation, which seeks for promoting social changes, that is, new perspectives on everyday life and ways of expression. Based on the author’s idea, cultural policies, especially audiovisual ones, seek to promote childhood changes and encourage adults by giving people voice, mainly those who are silenced, assuming a position opposite to the proposals of monopoly on productions of media based on consumerism and alienation ideas.

It is, moreover, according to the author, an attempt to make art in several ways, for the sheer delight of making it by expressing, sharing, reflecting and changing the periphery’s view of itself, in order to promote social changes. The audiovisual production of Tela Firme group shows the existence of the insiders of Terra Firme neighborhood, in the appreciation of their cultural practices and their daily lives.

Zanetti (2010, pp. 123 – 124) lists aspects analyzed in audiovisual practices that emerge in the low-income suburbs:

a) Valuing culture as a field of social transformation and political “activism”, and draw attention to the multiple and diversified character of culture in contemporary times (“cultural diversity”, “cultural peculiarities”, “new cultural and artistic order”, “character event”, “social, political and cultural”);

b) Constitution of a cultural movement through audiovisual practices among young insiders from peripheral neighborhoods, who could be called “filmmakers from peripheral areas”;

c) Promote proactive and active actions in the process, rather than passive actions. Being a protagonist, rather than being a “included” participant. Acting behind the cameras, as directors, and not just in front of the cameras, as a managed participant,

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<sup>7</sup> Interview granted by Batista, F. Belém, March 31, 2020.



being able to managed both production and sharing processes;

d) Expanding spaces exhibition of new audiovisual products (“democratization of audiovisual”, “open up a wider lens on the world”);

e) A sense of belonging to a social group;

f) Open up a wider lens on the world reality;

g) Ways of expressing and creating representations through the audiovisual.

The social injustice expressed in the video *Poderia ter sido você* connects with the idea of social recognition. In this sense, the requirements of self-representation, through artistic activities in which the audiovisual stands out, aim to provide a wider way of reading the world instead of reading it by hegemonic lenses, which have crystallized prejudices in relation to a particular social group - in this case insiders from peripheral neighborhoods and slum dwellers (Zanetti, 2010).

According to the author, when the discourse draws attention to “it is time for peripheral suburbs to express themselves”, what is understood is the desire to change the way these groups are represented in the public domain. Based on the data from fieldwork, will be discussed the data collected from interviews with residents with the proposal of understanding better the way the residents of Terra Firme neighborhood perceive the slaughter in 2014 as well as getting a sense of how the narrative of the video *Poderia ter sido você* affects their everyday life.

## We are on the screen: self-representation in the video *Poderia ter sido você*

As pointed out before, the research sought, above all, to understand the way of speaking and thinking of the insiders about the slaughter in 2014 together with the violence in Terra Firme neighborhood, in Belém, in order to understand better how they perceive the narrative of the mini-documentary *Poderia ter sido você* in a sensitive way, establishing a relationship between this and the tragic reality experienced with the slaughter, in relation to daily violence to which they are embedded.

Life, instituted by a normativity of the body, becomes precarious by the institution of externality to the world, that is, by an appearance in a fragmented or total contact with the world. In other words, “[...] the body is a social phenomenon: it is exposed to others, vulnerable by definition” (Butler, 2009, p. 33).

If certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense (Butler, 2009, p.1).

Therefore, there are conditions that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend as life from those we cannot. Based on the frames available to us, we apprehend the precariousness of life (Lage, 2018; Butler, 2009).

Another important point that Butler (2015) highlights is that life has value only when it is worthy of arousing sadness, when it is grievable, which stems from the loss of something that has affective value or correspondence. Otherwise, it becomes indifferent.

It is a “division of the sensitive in which these subjects are not counted as lives, nor are they even considered subjects, they are the refuse that needs to be shown so that it is avoided anyway” (Lage, 2018,

p. 74). In other words, violence generates more violence. Based on the precarity of young people's life from peripheral areas, mainly black people, they become more exposed to all kinds of violence, including justified violence (Lage, 2018).

The images below presents the headlines of Brazilian Newspapers "O Liberal" and "Diário do Pará de Belém" the day after the slaughter, focusing, above all, on Terra Firme neighbourhood.

Figure 1 – Killing spree on Terra Firme neighborhood after the death of a Police Officer



Source: O Liberal, 2014.

Figure 2 – Terror on the streets



Source: O Liberal, 2014.

Figure 3– Slaughters in the streets of Belém



Source: Diário do Pará, 2014.

Assunção, one of the research interviewees (2020), recalls that at that moment of the slaughter “we were revolted and for us it is clear that this came from the Police authority” (personal interview, March 29, 2020). She feels indignant at the circumstances in which all happened. “They should have investigated and arrested the one who killed Cabo Pet and justice would have played its part, but they came here cruelly” (personal interview)<sup>8</sup>. According to her:

It was a killing spree and we witnessed it. So the documentary also came to open the minds of many people who don’t want to believe that. The militia sends us pictures of the community to find out who is the next target; who is going to die. It became a bit of a banal thing. People think it is normal (personal interview).<sup>9</sup>

We can see, in Assunção’s words, the construction of the banality of evil, as Arendt postulates, in which the Police officers, at that moment, no longer perceive themselves in their own actions, they are unable to put themselves in the other’s shoes and understanding the dimension of what they are doing. That is, there is no reflection on how the destructive capacity of their action and the bureaucratization of public life could represent a threat to democracy (Arendt, 1999).

The slaughter quickly turns into a media spectacle to capture audiences, showing that real bloodshed took place the night before.

I’ve heard my friends say many times: “So-and-so died, so-and-so was killed because he was involved”, but who has the right to take someone’s life? Who has the right to come and murder and snatch a young man from his mother’s arms? Nobody has that right. People in our community say this because many of them are influenced by what the media shows. (personal interview).<sup>10</sup>

The documentary, in this sense, breaks with the order of sensations that prevails in the media dynamics, marked by the superficiality and absence of reflection around the slaughter, restoring to it the sensitive, reflective dimension, by showing how gratuitous were the violence and deaths that resulted

<sup>8</sup> Interview granted by Assunção, A. Belém, 29 March, 2020.  
<sup>9</sup> Interview granted by Assunção, A. Belém, 29 March, 2020.  
<sup>10</sup> Interview granted by Assunção, A. Belém, 29 March, 2020.

from it, as they bypassed justice, and represented the purest terror.

The sensitive dimension, highlighted by Haroche (2008), manages to confront the practices of humiliation, which promote disillusionment and discomfort. It is hidden in the most “[...] sensitive and deepest regions of subjectivity. On the other hand, says the author, “the ways of feeling lead us to scenarios that are gradually and insidiously possible. They lead us to widespread nihilism and extreme violence”. (p. 198).

We can observe the sensitive and political dimension in the video according to Modesto and Souza (2020):

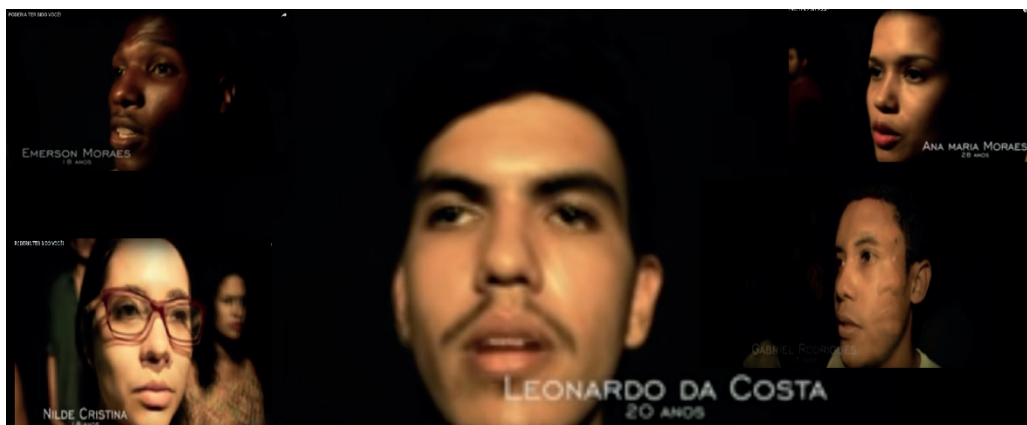
The video *Poderia ter sido você* brings this reflection, introducing these characters. It shows that they are young people, ordinary people and there was no reason for brutally murdering men, women and teenagers. The video has a sensitive and reflective dimension. (personal interview).<sup>11</sup>

I see victims of a system that kills blacks from low-income neighborhoods. I'm sure they recognize each other. They are memories of children, siblings, friends and acquaintances who were murdered or were affected in some way.<sup>12</sup>

In our view, *Poderia ter sido você* represents the sensitive dimension of the slaughter, as it presupposes the exercise of the senses, as Deleuze (2006) points out. The video, therefore, becomes not a “sensible being, but the being of the sensitive”.

It is not about the given, but it is about where the given is placed. He is also, in a way, the insensitive, for my interviewers, as they relive and apprehend a sign of the sensible in which in the video there is “sensitivity, in the presence of what can only be felt (the insensitive, at the same time)” (p. 139).

Figura 4 – Video *Poderia ter sido você*



Source: Tela Firme YouTube channel (2015).<sup>13</sup>

In the mini-documentary, the victims of the slaughter are characters incorporated by young insiders from the neighborhood.

In the video, we see the victims being represented by people we know and who are with us. All this brings us together and makes us feel some of this pain and fear. The video in question, with the help of the internet, makes it possible to express our version of the facts, how we feel and how we see all this. It is the opposite of what

<sup>11</sup> Interview granted by Modesto, J. Belém, 2 April, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interview granted by Souza, V. Belém, 9 April, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved November 18, 2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTymeivrDkF8>

is conveyed by the mainstream media. We show that we suffer and are victims too. They are workers, students, artists, fathers and mothers who cry for their children expressed in the blood newspaper. For this, the press does not look. Sensationalism speaks louder and selling the news is much more important. (personal interview).<sup>14</sup>

In the video, we can recognize each other. I remember that there were only names, age, the way in which he was murdered or just a general number. Poderia ter sido você tried to humanize these words and numbers and show people's faces. The title of the vídeo brings the person closer to this reality. (personal interview).<sup>15</sup>

The video's narrative shows that they were young, ordinary people who had their lives brutally taken away. The video humanizes and individualizes each one. Everyone has a face, name and address. Mainly, a life story that was unjustifiably interrupted. In other words, the video goes against the media discourse, which naturalizes the episode, without the stories of these people, of these families, having been duly investigated, to know if they really had any involvement with the crime. There is the report of the fact, but not a deeper reflection to try making the event clearer.

The military police officer who was a research participant approved the way in which the narrative is presented in the video. He said that the members of Tela Firme treated the "victims as they should be, as human beings, and yet, this is a risky choice because it seems that the world thinks this is absurd." From the perspective of the military police officer (2020):

Tela Firme's film, it is clear that for those content producers the victims were not just an agenda, a number or a list of faceless names that would be used as a 'marketing' strategy against political enemies. There, the defense of life becomes clearer. (personal interview).<sup>16</sup>

Amaral (2020), one of the mothers interviewed, believes that the video reflects the drama experienced by the residents in the face of the slaughter:

When the Police officer sees you with the eyebrow with that line and the blonde hair, she says that whoever uses it is a clown or a criminal. Indeed, who says it's the state agent. When we don't have a state that really punishes those who kill in this way, that's the result. They gain more and more space. They become the force, which is what is happening now, within this context of violence. That is exactly what the video says. (personal interview).<sup>17</sup>

It is important to highlight, in the way of Aviz and Santos' thinking (2020), the counterpoint between the video narrative and the media narrative, depersonalizing, generalizing, dehumanizing the victims.

Tela Firme's video shows the victims as they really were. Where they lived, the name. In the big media, as has been said, what we hear are terms like "the element"; "the individual". These terms make it sound like they died because they were wrong somehow or because they were in the wrong place. (personal interview).<sup>18</sup>

The media naturalizes the episode. There was a slaughter and the newspapers report that these people had some involvement with trafficking. She does not investigate

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<sup>14</sup> Interview granted by Aviz, E. Belém, April 3, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Interview granted by Serrão, I. Belém, March 30, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Interview granted by Policial Oficcer, Belém, March 29, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Interview granted by Amaral, S. Belém, April 7, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Interview granted by Aviz, E. Belém, April 3, 2020.

the stories of these people, these families, to find out if those people were really involved in the crime. There is no question on the part of the State in this situation. They report the fact, but do not make a deeper reflection to make the event clearer. I see that the video talks about violence in the context of violence, but the media criminalizes it differently. The media criminalizes saying that the young man who was passing by assaulted so-and-so. If this young man was later murdered, it was because he stole. He was not arrested. It was not a socio-educational measure, because it does not educate anyone and we know that. That's my way of seeing it. There is nothing else to say about journalism produced particularly by Record and Liberal Network of television.<sup>19</sup>

For Mbembe (2018), racism has the task of regulating the distribution of death and enabling the murderous functions of the State. In necropolitics, as the author points out, the State claims the right to kill, which is echoed in the media coverage of the slaughter.

The slaughters, therefore, “aim not only to ‘civilize’ the ways of killing, but also to eliminate a large number of victims in a relatively short space of time” (Mbembe, 2018, p. 22). At the same time, a new cultural sensibility emerges, in which killing the enemy of the State is an extension. These are persistent forms of dehumanization, which have been reiterated since colonization, as Fanon (1963) exposed and they are directly related to racism together with torture and liquidations, following the logic of bloodshed against black people, which is strongly denounced.

The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved. The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lie in the fact that somewhere he has killed men. And even today they persist to organize this dehumanization rationally. But I as a man of color, to the extent that it becomes possible for me to exist absolutely, do not have the right to lock myself into a world of retroactive reparations. I, the man of color, want only this: That the tool never possesses the man. That the enslavement of man by man ceases forever. (Fanon, 2008, p. 180)

According to Costa (2020) this can be observed. In his view, what the newspapers show about the slaughter is a forged reality, which dehumanizes people and young people from the peripheral areas. As he explains:

So, I believe that the way that Tela Firme group acted in the documentary expresses a reality that is being told by young people, insiders from peripheral neighborhoods, by those who live there, that is, by those who live violence and suffer from cruelty and not from who do not live in the neighborhood, as the newspapers showed. This is a forged reality. (personal interview).<sup>20</sup>

Fanon (1963) draws attention to a rupture in the history of domination and oppression from one person to another, so as to remove the voices of the past that praised dehumanization and, in their place, bring about a communication that uncompromisingly defends freedom. According to him, it is a new humanism, which he calls revolutionary one, because it reorganizes dehumanization.

Amaral (2020), mother of one of the victims and a militant, when commenting on the video, believes that “the way they speak is great. I like it. I’ve liked it a lot, but I say that it still cannot come close to our reality, however, that, at least, is a start”. In her view, “that day was a start, but we’ve had more slaughters. We already had more things that could have shown more.” (personal interview).<sup>21</sup>

I took this video to other boys from other neighborhoods in Tapanã, which was where my son lived, and they recognized it. They said: “Auntie, it’s like when we’re here, we can’t be in front of the house they pass by. They hit. They do this, they do that.” So I

<sup>19</sup> Interview granted by Santos, S. Belém, March 28, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Interview granted by Costa, R. Belém, Mach 29, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Interview granted by Amaral, S. Belém, April 7, 2020.

think the video represented not only violence, but also the right to come and go that we don't have because we are on the periphery. As you have your blond hair and a tattoo, the Police officer criminalizes you. (personal interview).<sup>22</sup>

It can be seen, in Amaral's interview (2020) above, that the naturalization of violence is perceived and shared with young people from other peripheral neighborhoods. She touches on a key point: the right to come and go that is curtailed among these young people. Another mother, Cruz (2020), pointed out that Tela Firme's video recalls everything she lived, moments before her son was shot by militia. She recalls:<sup>23</sup>

As I said, that night could have been me too because if I had found the key I would have left and I would have been one of the victims. I would die along with him. Many people were locked in their homes in fear. (personal interview).

For another young interviewer, Silva (2020), the video warns young people. "I see a warning for the youth in relation to crime. I see that crime does not pay and that under no circumstances will the media see the bright side of the situation" (personal interview).<sup>24</sup>

## Final remarks

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, with regard to the authorial voice, it proved to be an important space to echo historically silenced voices. The slaughter in 2014 is an extreme example of the violence that prevails in everyday life not only in Belém but also in so many other cities all over the country. The research delved into deep waters and landed in springs of self-revelation and reconstruction as a human being, as shown in the intersubjective practices of recognition.

The research showed the political dimension of recognition that the mini-documentary *Poderia ter sido você* placed at the foreground, from the perspective of self-representation, discussed here. Tela Firme group is not a single group, there are several existing movements in the neighborhood areas, constituted of almost a hundred active groups, all of them act against media domination, which is highlighted in the vídeo by ways of speaking of mothers, participants and members of Tela Firme group.

The recurring discourse associated with audiovisual production from low-income suburbs defends the right to self-representation as a way of combating stereotypes in media representations and also the refusal of representational, communicative and interpretive practices of the hegemonic sectors of society. Based on Manaíra Carneiro's words, co-director of the film called *5x favela – Agora por nós mesmos*, "The representation changes, it's another story. They are not the ones who say what we should or should not do, no more. We have our voice and we do tell our stories" (2013, p. 127).

Otherwise, for my interviewees, it is imperative to recognize that this world, although it was also built by them, is not really for them. Their world, which is one of solidarity, of sensitivity, humanizes (Freire, 2011). By amplifying the voices and the diversity of performances in audiovisual production, it is able to inspire people and also to express their views, their positions in the way they perceive and apprehend the sense of justice and injustice. Especially about the experience of communication carried out in conditions that contradict the logic of information networks, thus strengthening social relations between individuals who share the same map of meanings. The proximity relationships were possible because of the place, which promotes an incessant process of interaction, "a communicational experience that takes place in an opposite way to the logic of informational networks, strengthening social bonds between individuals who

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<sup>22</sup> Interview granted by Amaral, S. Belém, April 7, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Interview granted by Cruz, A. Belém, April 10, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Interview granted by Silva, V. Belém, April 9, 2020.

have the same social frames of experience” (Brito, Steinbrenner & Cunha, 2017, p. 24).

Youth are at the forefront of resistance movements. It is also important to note that since then there have been several slaughters and those who live on the low-income suburbs of Belém continue to have to reinvent ways of contesting the excluding urban order, which insists on considering us ‘outsiders’. Even if the news about the violence in the peripheral areas, the stigmas, the slaughters, are forgotten by the mass that consumes this news, the struggle of young people from Terra Firme area still keeps strong in their daily lives. The fight against inequality is daily and incessant. For example, when young people look for a job and face prejudice simply because they live in the Terra Firme neighborhood and have to deal with “jokes”. Or when they go out to have fun and the fear of always being approached accompanies them.

The recurring discourse associated with audiovisual production from low-income sThe production of Tela Firme group has brought positive results, that is, the group initiative has grown in the media, being a reference as a popular communication group whose voice represents a whole generation that fights for its space for sociability in peripheral neighborhoods.

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