"US FOR OURSELVES": ENREGISTERING AND DE-ESCALATING CORONAVIRUS UNDER NERVOUS CONDITIONS

"NÓS POR NÓS": ENREGISTRAMENTO E DESESCALAÇÃO DO CORONAVÍRUS SOB CONDIÇÕES NERVOSAS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore how attention to language and communication has been one of the strategies to combat the pandemic and foster health justice in the deprived areas of the city. To investigate such aspect, we draw on the conceptions of *enregisterment, de-escalation* and *orders of indexicality*. We focus on practices of *pragmatic survival* enacted by *Maré Mobilization Front.*
Keywords: enregistering; de-escalation; order of indexicality; pragmatic survival; straight talk.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, exploramos como a linguagem e a comunicação têm sido uma das estratégias para combater a pandemia e assegurar a atenção à saúde nas áreas carentes das cidades. Para investigar tal aspecto, baseamo-nos nas concepções de *enregistramento, des-escalação* e *ordens de indexicalidade*. Focalizamos as práticas de *sobrevivência pragmática* implementadas pela Frente de Mobilização Maré que envolvem a produção e divulgação de material informativo sobre o Coronavírus em linguagem acessível.
Palavras-chave: enregistramento; desescalação; ordens de indexicalidade; sobrevivência pragmatica; papo reto.

1. NERVOUS CONDITIONS

Pâmela Carvalho, a Historian and researcher who lives in the Maré Complex (*Complexo da Maré*), a large favela in Rio de Janeiro, has stated earlier this year:

> So, since "no water comes out of the tap", here we are bringing the rain. We are seeking our rights. We are living "us for ourselves" in its most visceral sense. If the "right to water" does not come from *there*, it comes from *here*. So, civil society organizations from slums and organized residents have "brought the rain" in the midst of a pandemic.

Her lines are part of a news comment (CARVALHO, 2020) in which she talks about the challenges favela dwellers deal with to adapt the recommendations from health authorities to their realities, in the battle against Coronavirus. In the absence of essential services such as water supply, their way out is to make things happen by their own means, independent from public policies. Such position is emblematic of a naturalized *modus vivendi* on two counts. Firstly, it recycles the state of exception (MBEMBE, 2003) in the colonial world that pronounced the social death of those taken to be disposable (as slaves). Secondly, it goes back to historical ways of resisting annihilation. We take this dual logic as an orienting frame to explore micro-macro relationships in the present dystopian scenario.

Many theorists have attested that the pandemic has exacerbated the social imbalance still reigning in contemporary Brazil. "Just note that the people who die the most are the poor residents of favelas and peripheries", says Edson Diniz, director of Redes da Maré, a civil organization that promotes citizenship. He is referring to the fact that Covid-19 has highlighted the several wounds opened by the carelessness and negligence of Brazilian authorities with the social welfare of the poorest, emphasizing the worst that a colonialist mentality has produced: inequality and exclusion determined by markers such as race and social class.

"Nervous conditions" is how the Zimbabwean novelist Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988) describes hostile environments in which the legacy of persistent colonialism keeps producing a social abyss and social injustice. Although her focus is former Rhodesia and other African countries, the uneasiness she shares with readers resonates in other parts of the world that daily confront the damages caused by colonial practices, which include grouping and ranking individuals according to imagined categories. Race, gender, sexuality, and social class lie among the labels that declare the worth of some lives and the unimportance of others.

This kind of differentiation has structuring effects that affect more sharply, and most often lethally, the so-called Global South (SANTOS, 2020). In Brazil, for example, alarming numbers translate the damages set forth by colonial dynamics.

According to the latest version of the *Atlas of Violence* (IBGE-IPEA 2020), more than 650 thousand blacks have been murdered in Brazil in the past 10 years. Between 2008 and 2018, deaths of colored people have increased 34.2%, against a decrease of more than 15% in white deaths in the same period. In 2018, the homicide rate of black women per 100,000 inhabitants was almost double that of white women. A similar imbalance applies to LGBTQI+. Records of attempted murders have increased by 88%, indicating that the victims are mostly black homosexuals. These figures have been calculated based on criteria such as diseases, violent events, and deaths caused by legal actions.

The report also brings data about the geopolitics of violence, reinforcing the connection between precarious regions and pronounced socio-spatial vulnerability. It is thus no surprise that death rates are higher in specific urban neighborhoods where population density, race, and poor infrastructure correlate. In spite of their specificities, these territories share similitudes. Besides the irregular occupation of vast areas by marginalized individuals, deficient sewage treatment, trash out in the open, unsanitary dwellings, and unsafe environments characterize their landscape. Moreover, the incidence of communicable diseases (i.e. dengue, tuberculosis), chronic respiratory syndromes, and deaths from armed conflicts is quite high (GOMES, 2017; PORTO, 2015). This general precariousness ultimately configures the social basis of health and violence (PORTO, 2015)—an expression of the historical fragility concerning public policies for the working classes.

Therefore, a state of risk is pervasive in the country's urban peripheries, segregated by the lack of economic, technological, educational, and health investments. It is thus fair to say that "nervous conditions" or "day-to-day disaster" (CUNHA ET AL., 2015) is systemic, produced by the absence of public provision (OLIVEIRA, 2019). This tension increases exponentially in times of crisis, especially in a period of health calamity. Besides the existence of minimum resources to prevent diseases, let alone a highly-infectious one, constant police raids have continued to kill civilians and children amidst one of the most devastating plagues in world history. This is illustrative of the multiple epidemics that continuously assault peripheral communities in different Brazilian states, other than the present health catastrophe.

According to Oliveira (2019, p.257), such adverse contexts demand "pragmatic survival", the capacity to daily cope with hazards that impose a specific form of existence; one that "subverts the very dichotomy life/death so solidly constructed in the imagination of modern cities." This kind of action

amidst hardships calls for an acute sensitivity to perform "contextual analysis and prospective calculus in search for solutions to problems and specific necessities."

In this paper, we embrace this appeal for pragmatic action from a specific angle. We focus on how attention to language and communication has been one of the strategies to combat the pandemic and foster health justice in the deprived areas of the city. Acknowledging local characteristics and peculiarities, community collectives have taken a series of communicative actions. Their aim was to recontextualize government briefings on prevention against Coronavirus in a register that could speak to the diversity of linguistic experiences of people living in favelas. One of these collectives warned:

> "We need to arrive with information that is assimilated, and this is only possible with specific communication, made by those who know the local dynamics, with language that can reach specific audiences within the favelas."[1]

This is an ethically engaged stance that reminds us that disputes over regimes of language are a key aspect of colonialization and modernity (PINTO, 2015; MOITA-LOPES, 2015). Such a position counters the ideological project based on purism and correctness that have standardized languages by homogenizing the richness of linguistic practices under a single pragmatic label, as is the case of Brazilian Portuguese.

It follows that the ability to conform to rules and conventions is a template to rank language users unequally. Such ideology relegates those whose ways of speaking transgress cultured uses to a subaltern position that excludes them from the realm of citizenship. The fact that official communication about Covid-19 has been designed in a "standard" register privileges educated addressees at the expense of the "popular/illiterate" who are thus positioned as second-hand citizens. Restricting access to information based on linguistic prejudice is a kind of historical violation that contributes for the perpetuation of social and racial inequity.

If language and society are woven together, linguistic and social survival are inextricably linked. It is in this vein that we turn our attention to the project "Maré Solidarity against Coronavirus, #CoronaInTheFavela" (*Maré solidária contra o Coronavírus, #CoronaNaFavela*). The latter has been implemented by local residents in association with NGOs, collectives, and community leaders in the 16 favelas that make up the Maré Complex in Rio de Janeiro. It fought against being simply left by the State at the mercy of chaos. The confrontation of social exclusion involves

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1. Fiocruz March 24, 2020. Available at http://www.ensp.fiocruz.br/portalensp/informe/site/materia/detalhe/48479. Accessed: August 04, 2020.

various political actions. One of them has to do with designing ways to ensure that the health recommendations of the City Hall would circulate in all corners of the territory.

For the purposes of this paper we will consider two instances of the campaign of the State Government of Rio de Janeiro, which included a series of charts recommending preventive actions, as the ones in Figures 1 and 2 below. Their semiotic construction selects specific interlocutors, through imagistic resources. One of them is part of a larger poster entitled "NEW CORONAVIRUS" (see Appendix 1). The alternation of black hands and white hands indicates a hierarchy concerning hygiene habits. "Black hands" are advised to be cleaned after coughing and sneezing while "white hands" just need sanitizers to complement their daily grooming. The other circulated as a banner in different parts of the city and on various web pages. It fashions the message in yellow, green, blue and white, the colors of the Brazilian flag, in tune with the nationalist perspective that characterizes the present administration's actions.

Figure 1. Campaign of the State Government of Rio de Janeiro: Instructions on "*How to prevent? Protecting nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing Washing your hands frequently, especially after sneezing or coughing. No sharing of personal objects like glasses and utensils. Using hand sanitizers. Stay home. Avoid gatherings.*"

Figure 2. Campaign of the State Government of Rio de Janeiro: "*Rio against Coronavirus. Avoid going out. Let's halt Coronavirus. Rio needs to win one more battle. Get informed. Protect yourself.*"

In spite of their differences, they share two features. Both suggest that social distancing may prevent contamination (as signaled by "avoid gatherings", "stay home" and "avoid going out"). Moreover, they communicate precaution measures in standard Portuguese. These two moves imagine a specific textual itinerary, or communicable cartography (BRIGGS, 2007), which, besides projecting a literate readership, delineates a positive metapragmatic response to it. We can say that the "information map" in these two images, from their very inception, produce asymmetrical relations between core and marginalized regions. They rule out those who are illiterate and the ones who cannot stop working. Gizele Martins, a journalist who lives in Maré, has pondered during an interview by whatsapp:

> "Commercial media employed a different kind of language, distant from our local communication; for example, how people can keep their houses well-ventilated when many houses in the favela don't have any windows (…) how people can maintain social distancing when most of them live in a one-room home. How, for example, can they constantly wash hands when there's lack of water, you know?"

Considering this scenario, the questions we ask are: How are these recommendations using standard Portuguese strategically recontextualized to adjust to the different linguistic, sociocultural and racial profiles that integrate the complex environment of Maré? How do local instances of communication indexically invoke historical contingencies? We observe patterns of enregisterment (AGHA 2004, 2007) and de-escalation practices (CARR; FISHER 2016) in sign-assemblages that construct a sense of intimacy with both Coronavirus and prevention protocols. Our argument is that communication resources may be reordered in such a way

that they may change participants' perception of an otherwise "alien" and distant phenomenon.

2. COMPLEXITY, DIVERSITY AND LATENT POTENTIALS IN MARÉ

With 140 thousand residents, the Complexo da Maré is the 9th most populated district and the largest group of favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro, occupying an area of 5 kilometers. This space, whose population was first recorded in the 1940's, is a cluster of 16 favelas and jumbled homes located in a maze of narrow streets in the North region of the city (see map in Figure 3). As is characteristic of other similar communities in Brazil, Maré faces economic and financial vulnerability, and lack of investment in health, education, and basic services.

Figure 3. Complexo da Maré Map[2]

In 2010, the Observatório de Favelas, an institution based in Maré, created and organized by activists and researchers from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, led the implementation of a population census, in partnership with community leaders and the 16 resident associations of the region. Guided by a commitment to citizen rights, the project provided locals with special training to carry out the task. This initiative was an important milestone in the process of organizing the civil population to solve problems public authorities are not intimately familiar with. A multidisciplinary team involving geographers, statistical analysts, and social scientists has detected

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2. Available at < https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/05/01/moradores-nao-tem-agua-e-sabao-diz-integrante-de-grupo-que-faz-iniciativas-de-combate-a-covid-19-na-mare.ghtml> Accessed: September 7, 2020.

quite unique internal specificities that combine differentiated origins, trajectories, and profiles. Their research covered the characteristics of housing and people, such as access to urban services, age profile, school background, origin, marital status, and many others.

According to the census, diverse people circulate through the streets of Maré. Among its inhabitants 62% are black, 51% are women, and 51% are young adults below 30 years of age. Mothers in their 20s amount to 56% of the women. Although 61% has lived in Maré since birth, part of the population is the result of intense migration flows in the neighborhood. Like in other favelas, poor people from all parts of the country, especially from the North and Northeast areas, have swarmed to urban centers in the South and Southeast, in search of job opportunities (FERNANDES; COSTA, 2013; GAMA-ROSA, 2013). Such a phenomenon explains the presence of a strong Northeastern community in Maré, around 10%.

These rich demographics influence the differing cultural, educational, and literacy levels across the community. Artists, high school youngsters, and those without education co-exist. University students, researchers, and activists share interests. Small business owners negotiate rules with outlaws. Together they compose a complex conjuncture that blends pervasive tensions and creative potential. It gave rise to Marielle Franco, a black queer councilwoman who fought fiercely for human rights. It has also produced such violent subjectivities as Michael de Souza Malveira—one of Maré's drug kingpins, with a long list of homicides in his background. Michael, arrested after a shootout with the police in 2012, has been released this year due to prison overcrowding, while Marielle was tragically assassinated in the city center on March 14, 2018.

At that time, there was a military intervention in the public security of Rio de Janeiro, during which civil society, small NGOs, and favela-based collectives reported numerous cases of violence and police abuse. Acting conjointly, they installed an online communication chain and developed apps for monitoring occurrences of shootings and homicides in the city (RODRIGUES; ARMSTRONG, 2019). Statistics evidence the naturalization of necropolitics (MBEMBE, 2003) at play in the territory. Dehumanized by parameters that hierarchize the value of human life, locals count on themselves to construct civil rights by their own means.

Marielle Franco was part of this pool. In her political trajectory, she incisively criticized both the politics of confrontation put into practice by the State and the police insensitivity to reported cases of violence, whose investigations were never carried out. Her own murder remains unsolved to this day. Her legacy is still around, however, inspiring a host of pragmatic actions to counter adversities

and the hovering possibility of extermination. It also reminds us that overlooking the precarity experienced by the disenfranchised is a kind of strain that creates widespread vulnerability in Rio de Janeiro, which makes precariousness the common state in neoliberal societies (KASMIR, 2018).

The current moment of health crisis could not be more eloquent in asserting the capacity of entire communities for self-organization, showing that the militarized presence of the State does not prevent them from taking action. When the first Coronavirus cases appeared in Rio around March 2020, Maré soon became the favela area with the highest death toll according to official numbers[3]. Infectologist Daniel Soranz[4] noted that the absence of adequate assistance to symptomatic patients in suitable healthcare clinics was responsible for cross contamination in communities thus contributing to the disease's level of lethality. Furthermore, the military interventions and the violations perpetrated for the sake of security increased throughout the pandemic.

Distant from public policies that do not include them, those discarded as human rubbish "will speak and will speak well" (GONZALEZ, 1984, p.225), by reimagining themselves amidst refuse heaps. In times of Covid-19, they spoke through networks of solidarity[5] in favor of pushes for essential health rights in deprived spaces. This purpose is summarized by one participant:

> Together with the residents, we created several hot spots to wash our hands from the moment we saw that many residents don't have running water and soap. This initiative started together with the children, they created the posters. We collected the bottles, sterilized them and hung one with water and the other with soap.[6]

Besides the distribution of hand sanitizers and food, and the organization/reception of donations, emergency measures also prioritized communication. The latter is a central survival strategy in that the colonial project and the control over language cannot be dissociated from one another. The aim of spreading cultured

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3. Data available at <https://www.frentemare.com/covid> Accessed: September 25, 2020.
4. Available at <https://www.meiahora.com.br/geral/2020/06/5933676-moradores-da-mare-espalham-noticias-sobre-covid-19-para-alertar-populacao-local.html#foto=1.>Accessed: August 04, 2020.
5. They include the following Campaigns: Frente de Mobilização da Maré; Juntos Pelo Alemão; Escola sem Muros/Grupo ECO; Associação de Moradores do Morro Santa Marta; Manguinhos Solidário Contra o Coronavírus; Rolê dos Favelados; Casa Amarela Providência; Frente CDD; Morro dos Macacos pede socorro; Rocinha Resiste; Todos pelo Santo Amaro; Avante Serrinha; Suporte para Santa Cruz em tempos de COVID-19; Apadrinhe um sorriso; Movimenta Caxias; and, Mães da Favela.
6. Gabrielle Alves one of the designers of the project "Maré Solidarity against Coronavirus". Available at <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/05/01/moradores-nao-tem-agua-e-sabao-diz-integrante-de-grupo-que-faz-iniciativas-de-combate-a-covid-19-na-mare.ghtml.>Accessed: August 04, 2020.

Portuguese with highest possible homogeneity is still a dominant approach that has caused the decimation of local languages and kinds of knowledge (CAVALCANTI; MAHER, 2017). This seems to be the ideology orienting the projection of a linguistically "educated" audience, mainly the middle and upper classes, as the favored interlocutors in the communication of protection practices—a choice that recycles the marked asymmetry between those who can live and those who can be abandoned to fend for themselves.

In Maré, a group of local communicators launched the campaign ""Maré Solidarity against Coronavirus". It came along with the promotion of a matchfunding to distribute scholarships to young community journalists for the production of stories related to the Covid-19 pandemic in accessible language. With the lack of internet in some homes and without access to formal education, much of the information disclosed by the media did not reach the families, as explained by our interviewee, Gizele Martins, who was involved in the campaign:

> "Knowing that most people has limited or no access to the Internet, television or even electricity, we had a huge concern with the use of language, a language we use in our daily matters, that is accessible, explaining that Covid is a virus (…) we thought of different communication tools, thinking about access to language and inclusion of everyone in this kind of communication."

The strengthened information flow ended up appealing to more residents and collectives. Their support transformed the initial campaign into the Mare Mobilization Front (*Frente de Mobilização da Maré*), which implemented different modes of communication that were replicated spontaneously in different communities. Information circulated by means of sound trucks, banners, posters, podcasts, imagery, and posts on social media. According to a resident born in Maré, "the work performed by the Mobilization Front is very important. When the sound truck announces that Covid-19 kills, and that now the virus can get your neighbor, friend, or relative, people have a better understanding of what is going on."[7]

Moreover, local artists made graffiti walls to update the number of infected and dead people during the pandemic, as in the work of Rafael Cruz below (see Figure 4).

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7. Maré resident Flávia Cândido Available at <https://www.meiahora.com.br/geral/2020/06/5933676-moradores-da-mare-espalham-noticias-sobre-covid-19-para-alertar-populacao-local.html#foto=1.>Access: August 04, 2020.

Figure 4. Graffiti wall in Maré by Rafael Cruz.[8]

#Mobilization Front of Maré		
COVID PANEL		
Brazil Confirmed: 44,515 Dead: 2,141	STAY AT HOME	Rio de Janeiro Confirmed: 4,008 Dead: 341

"We're fully focused on the data, but not everyone", stated the artist, who wanted passers-by to be aware of the damaging effects of the disease. Upon forging such perspective, he resorts to interdependent dimensions. A palette of dark tones, ominous drawings, numbers, and expressions like "confirmed" and "dead" are signs that function metaphorically in the construction of Covid as a scary villain. The time-space anchorage created by the contrast between figures in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro add to the seriousness of the portrayal, which escalates along the daily number updates. Following Carr and Lempert (2016), we can say that the artist has semiotised, or *scaled*, the menace posed by Covid-19 by interlacing signs indexing fear, negativity, and a dangerous impact.

This kind of semiotic labor refashions the medical jargon into a way of speaking pejoratively referred to as "favelese". However, it may be resignified as "papo reto", or straight talk. According to Renata Souza (2016), papo reto is

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8. Available at <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/05/01/moradores-nao-tem-agua-e-sabao-diz-integrante-de-grupo-que-faz-iniciativas-de-combate-a-covid-19-na-mare.ghtml> Accessed: September 07, 2020.

related to popular, local, and alternative communication which "without angling or overthinking, it's that way of forming and informing without beating around the bush, that goes straight to the point of interest: the struggle for the right to life and voice."[9]

It is a kind of register that emerges out of different acts of enregisterment. In the next section, we explore this move theoretically, focusing on how it resists colonial linguistic knowledge.

3. SEMIOTIZING THE PANDEMIC: ENREGISTERMENT, SCALING AND ORDERS OF INDEXICALITY

According to Agha, language users describe differences among speech forms by using myriad metapragmatic labels such as "upper-class speech", "informal speech", or "popular speech", among many others (AGHA, 2004; 2007). Such phenomenon known as register distinction has to do with the association of discourse with particular social practices, performances, and categories of people. Distinctions of this kind are ideological constructs that imagine groups and their linguistic repertoires as homogenous communities. As such, they establish linguistic patterns or models of action that domesticate diversity while discriminating those who are apt in a specific language from those who are not. After all, taming language has always integrated colonial language policies as a strategy to secure national unity and territory control (WOOLARD, 1998).

Registers, therefore, do not relate directly to a specific referent in the world. Questioning the object-designation model of meaning, Agha contends that our everyday acts of referring to people, their way of speaking, or their attributes are entangled with complex sociocultural relations and models. For him, these models depend (AGHA, 2007, p.82)

> on the ways in which they bring together diverse phenomena into unifying rubrics (e.g. unite a number of behaviors into a metasemiotic grouping so that they are treated as expressions of the same, or of analogous, acts), convert one sort of cultural phenomenon into another (e.g. convert speech registers into emblems of political or economic identity), link together public and private domains of experience (e.g. treat overt behaviors as indexical of mental states).

Accordingly, what we take as transparent denotational signs/expressions mobilizes an ample repertoire of conventions and patterns that index membership

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9. Forward by Renata Souza in Gianotti, Claudia Santiago (ed.) Experiências em comunicação popular no Rio de Janeiro ontem e hoje: uma história de resistência nas favelas cariocas Rio de Janeiro: NPC, Núcleo Piratininga de Comunicação.

to specific communities. For example, when one identifies "favelese" one is not indicating a natural language fact. Rather, one is reflectively projecting a typified image of the interlocutor that positions him/her in a specific time-space hierarchically inferior to an alleged "high form of speech". In the author's own words, a register attributes "stereotypic indexical values to performable signs" (AGHA, 2007, p.81), which are continuously ranked and valorized, depending on the orienting ideology.

This kind of perception is based on co-occurring signs, verbal and non-verbal, that comprise accent, pronunciation, stress, body motion, dress codes, among many other resources. When enacted, they instantiate social identities, relational configurations and group-level associations that point to recognizable sociohistorical system of stratification. Blommaert (2005) terms this sociolinguistic process *orders of indexicality*, while indicating that ordering meanings does not produce fixed closed systems. They are mutable and can undergo a series of transformations in response to complex environments. For the sake of illustration, let us consider the case of "favelese", a register that does not comply with a cultured linguistic ideology. If on one specific occasion it may be dismissed as a "low form of speech", in a different event—as in "Maré says no to Coronavirus"—it may signal resistance to necropolitics, occupying a high position in the order of indexicality of solidarity. Meanings and values attributed to register performance are fluid and dependent on who is speaking to whom, where, when, and under which circumstances. They attend to features that influence the degrees of compliance or resistance that are achieved. Valorizing practices attend to features that influence the degree of compliance or resistance that are achieved. For example, the deployment of non-standard language is likely to produce very different meaning- effects when uttered by a favela activist during a mass rally or by a favela dweller in a brawl. While the former may be interpreted positively as straight talk to the people, the latter may be belittled as rude and bad-mannered.

Therefore, register deployment interweaves a set of simultaneous, and highly reflexive, doings. As a semiotic activity, it involves reflecting on signs, context and conduct; judging their appropriateness to a social scene; and evaluating their interactional effects. Agha hence invites us to move our point of view from register to processes of enregisterment in communicative practices. They comprehend a dialogue between norm and innovation. On the one hand, enregistered signs invoke recognizable social personae, social roles, and relationships that position interlocutors according to recurrent orders of indexicality. Nevertheless, because connecting people through signs is an interpersonal and contextual achievement,

the relative stability of a social order may be dislodged, rearranged, and eventually unmade.

Acknowledging this movement, may frame acts of enregisterment as scalar operations that enmesh geographical and historical scales. At the same time that they orient to durable regimes of language, they recycle them in the fleeting here-and-now of semiotic encounters where disturbances, big or small, are likely to occur. We contend that paying attention to social actors' scalar habits, i.e. the sign activity whereby humans organize not only spatiotemporal relations, but also "sort, group, and categorize many things, people and qualities in terms of relative degree of elevation and centrality" (CARR; LEMPERT, 2016, p.3) may disturb linguistic ideologies that discredit pragmatic variability as trash.

That said, we can appreciate Rafael Cruz's scalar work above (see Figure 4), drawing attention to its semiotic design. In order to assert the gravity of Coronavirus, he projected a configuration in which measurement, comparison, categorization, and analogy crafted scalable qualities that brought the disease nearer to Maré's sociocultural life. Put differently, he engaged in *de-escalation* (CARR; FISHER, 2016. p.135) by making a distant scenario closer and more intimate. This scalar mobility takes part in the enregisterment of the virus in "favelese".

We see these actions as acts of resistance, a focus we sustain in the remainder of this paper.

4. DE-ESCALATING THREAT

In Rio de Janeiro, as in other places worldwide, social distancing and working from home were encouraged as the best courses of action against contamination. Nevertheless, following these orientations is not feasible for all. In the case of Maré, and other favelas, high demographic rates, unsanitary conditions, and the lack of information mingle with other forms of precarization. Low wages, unemployment, and the necessity to do all sorts of odd jobs push people to take risks.

These circumstances point to the limited effectiveness of the official campaigns in the underprivileged areas discussed above. One of the participants of the "Maré says no to Corona" mobilization explains, "There are many people in the favelas (…) as their houses are small and there are lots of people in them, it's difficult to keep people indoors (…) people keep hanging around."

Moreover, irresponsible speeches from President Jair Bolsonaro, Rio Mayor Marcelo Crivella, and certain major entrepreneurs contradicted health experts worldwide. They criticized confinement procedures and encouraged the

population to return to their normal routine. This ambivalence added to the intense exchange of fake news, which has made it even more difficult for people to be aware of the seriousness of the pandemic. As a result, the population began to discredit data from the WHO and the Ministry of Health, making it more difficult for communicators in Maré to combat counter-information. The number of residents on the streets skyrocketed. A growing sense of urgency encouraged a group of almost 70 communicators from peripheries all over the country to unite and work together with locals to meet their communicative demands[10]. Their cooperation triggered a fertile textual production, whose itinerary we set out to track.

Methodologically, we have followed text trajectories on the Internet (websites, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook) in order to understand a larger ecology of communication and the shifting of texts across contexts (BLOMMAERT, 2005; FABRÍCIO, 2014; MELO, 2019). We have considered material produced by 1.) independent collaborative media such as Maré Vive, FrenteMare, RedesdaMare, and FavelaSemCorona; and 2.) Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), the most important research center for studies of infectious diseases and public health in Brazil. We have come across the social media profiles of collectives from different favelas in Rio that sought to raise awareness about the pandemic. Working cooperatively, these online spaces of resistance acted to reduce the possibility of a disastrous wave of deaths. Our data were generated on such a productive environment. They integrate a large corpus comprising images, posts, videos, podcasts, news articles, and other publications geared to Maré residents. We have also used social media (Whatsapp and Facebook) to interview people who have encountered texts produced by Maré communicators. They include two residents of Maré, the aforementioned journalist Gizele Martins and a hairdresser, along with a rapper who works at the Observatório Cultural da Maré. The three of them have been influenced by the above-mentioned communication plan.

For the purposes of our discussion in this paper, we focus on a small fragment of the wider net of chained texts woven by this push for the democratization of communication. We zoom in onto four moments of enregisterment and observe the scalar logic at play. Their presentation is organized according to levels of de-escalation, i.e. semiotic work that seeks engagement between interlocutors and the creation of empathy with the texts.

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10. Interview with Gizele Martins on podcast. Available at <https://open.spotify.com/episode/16tXn ZaXQg3RjGlhSda2Xk?si=vtGGPAm-S6KGcaEvwZtC9A>

4.1 Check out Corona!

The poster in Figure 5 is part of the communication campaign *Check Out Corona!* whose content includes radio soap operas, pieces and videos for social media, and posters. It was produced by Fiocruz. The foundation is located right next to the Maré Complex and acted conjointly with the Maré Mobilization Front. The material in focus was conceived to circulate on Whatsapp and Instagram, being available for download at the Fiocruz institutional site and Maré Online.

As a communicative practice, the poster interlaces two register models. One of them is more informal. Its semiotic design deploys popular expressions such as *Se liga no Corona!* (Check out Corona!). The use of italics and bold types, the imperative form, and the exclamation mark compose an emphatic call for action that suggests features of orality and informality. As such it contextualizes the warning in *No bars, barbecues, shopping, church, nor dance parties*. These references to identifiable locales and leisure activities anchor the message in the day-to-day time-space of the favela. One of the possible effects of this sign assemblage is to position text producers and consumers on an equal footing.

CHECK OUT CORONA!	Fiocruz We're in this together
IT IS TIME TO STAY HOME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. No bars, barbecues, shopping, church, nor dance parties.	#payattentiontocorona

Figure 5. Material available at Fiocruz site suitable for Whatsapp or Instagram posts <https://portal.fiocruz.br/sites/portal.fiocruz.br/files/imagensPortal/posts-se-liga-no-corona_1000x1000px_02_0.jpg >

Nevertheless, other coexisting signs project an institutional identity that reorganizes the social relationships being negotiated. Notice that the warning is prefaced by a piece of advice delivered in capital letters, bold type, and grey color *IT IS TIME TO STAY HOME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.* Insinuating a more

sober style, it frames the subsequent utterance as a command by an authoritative voice—perhaps of a health expert or parental figure. This contrast is sharpened by the presence of other elements in the composition. Firstly, occupying the upper left side of the image, there is a blue virus whose color equals the logo of *Sistema Único de Saúde*—SUS (Unified Health System), accessible to all Brazilian citizens. Its position inside a balloon whose arrow points to an utterance can be read not only as a cautioning by health experts but also as a cartoon-like catchphrase.

The layout and the use of color also enhance the difference in register forms. Its balance and "hygiene" suggest traces of an impulse to "clean up" semiotic activity (CAMERON, 2012). Firstly, two graphic elements contribute to a sense of order. The composition in 1 (an inverted L), connecting two vectors, softens the contrasts involved in the joint venture between reputable Health institutions (Fiocruz and SUS) and a neighboring community. Secondly, the shade of blue linking the virus and the image of the Maré Complex indexes the institutional-local partnership. This juxtaposition of medical concerns and the community's everyday life mitigates the tension between different time-space references. Such a perspective is strengthened by the position of the institutional logo "Fiocruz, We're in this together" and its hashtag "#payattentiontocorona" against the favela background.

This scalar configuration, is spite of interfacing expert and local registers, inscribes communication in an order of indexicality that projects asymmetrical participant roles: counsellor and those in need of counselling. Nevertheless, a different register formation performing more horizontal relationships may arise in response to an alternative scalar design.

4.2 Does it sound familiar?

The text in Figure 6 below is a Tweet posted on MareVive (*MareIsAlive*), an independent communication media that counts on the cooperation of Maré residents.

(left image panel)	DO YOU KNOW THAT MASS, CHURCH SERVICE, SOCCER, MARKET, BIRTHDAY PARTY, BARBECUE, BAR, DANCE, PARTY, HANGING OUT, VISITING RELATIVES?
	STOP IT, FAVELA!
	COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) IS MORE SERIOUS THAN YOU THINK.
	#CoronaInTheOutskirts
	Favela, understand that this thing is more serious that you think. Avoid going out, do your best baby, stay home, you don't need alcohol, you just have to wash your hands. Your health and other people's health depend on each of us. If you have no choice and have to go out, bring hand sanitizer, paper towels, napkins, and a mask. Let's keep loving at a distance.
	#MareIsAlive
	#CoronaInTheFavelas

Figure 6. Tweet on MareVive.

It is produced by local journalists for locals. This likely explains the scale-making struggle to create a sense of affinity. Although the blue background may evoke an institutional participant, the overall semiosis sheds light on one category of person. Firstly, direct forms of address (*you, your, us, favela, and baby*) set all interlocutors within favelas. Secondly, the conversational frame of the question and its content (*DO YOU KNOW THAT MASS, CHURCH SERVICE, SOCCER, MARKET, BIRTHDAY PARTY, BARBECUE, BAR, DANCE, PARTY, HANGING OUT, VISITING RELATIVES?*) depict addresser and addressees as sharing a similar register associated with a range of social habits. Thirdly, the register deployed includes several indices of expressive language that project a kind of emotional interpellation. Capital letters, different font sizes, punctuation (!), and propositions such as *Your health and other people's health depend on each of us* and *Let's keep loving* reframe the summons for

preventive actions. Instead of evaluating people's conduct morally, it appeals to a sense of collectivity and solidarity. Hence, the deontic value of the imperative form is contextualized as an invitation to act conjointly. Communication is thus scaled as an exchange between equals. Inquiries such as "Whose scale is it?" or "What does it achieve and for whom?" are not necessary because the scalar orientation is clear. There seems to be one kind of personhood in the encounter: favela people.

4.3 Re-scaling fake news

Many banners circulated in all favelas in Rio de Janeiro. According to Gizele Martins, banners communicate really well inside the favela because they contain short messages in simple language. They have been spread in strategic places. One of them in particular (see Figure 7 below) drew our attention because it enables us to connect register and historical formations. It circulated on the streets of favelas all over Brazil as a good-humored counter-discourse to a piece of fake news that announced a natural cure for Covid-19, asserting that the sulfur found in raw garlic would scare off the virus. It read: *Attention! They discovered a plant that is going to end the Coronavirus: Plant your ass on the sofa and stay home!*

The version in Figure 7 was produced in Alemão Complex (*Complexo do Alemão*), a large community adjacent to Maré. It was recontextualized in the profile of MareVive on Instagram[11].

| | Attention! They discovered a plant that is going to end the Coronavirus: Plant your ass on the sofa and stay home!

#Covid19InTheFavelas |

Figure 7. Fun banner in Alemão Complex gives alerts about precaution for the Coronavirus

Banners like the one above and its entextualization on an Internet post operate a sharp change in scale. It does complex spatiotemporal boundary work that is signaled by manifold semiotic actions. Signs such as two men holding a white piece of fabric, their clothes, and the background delineate locality and

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11. Available at < https://www.instagram.com/marevive/> Accessed: September 12, 2020.

belonging. Moreover, the use of informal language, the handwriting and the play with colors, indexing conventional symbolic associations, place communication at the level of ordinary interaction with a "homemade" product. For example, the use of the red color in *Attention! Coronavirus* and *#Covid19InTheFavelas* communicate straightforwardly ideas of danger while the green in *plant* denotes an element of the flora. These features select the public for the health and self-care recommendation *Plant your ass on the sofa and stay home!*, highlighted in blue. Although the blue color may establish a nexus with outsiders (like SUS and Fiocruz), other indexical cues tie the Coronavirus time-frame to the inner spaces of the favela.

The pun with the word *plant* used as a noun (a herb that can kill Corona) and as a verb in *plant your ass on the sofa* (an action that can metaphorically root a person to the soil) transforms the former piece of fake news into an emphatic, but playful, admonition. Nonetheless, the ironical key does not lessen its performative force. Delivered bald on record, with no mitigating devices, through the use of short sentences in the imperative form and in an informal register, the text expands the historical time-space of communication. The linguistic sign *bunda* (ass) does this kind of rescaling, by establishing semiotic links between the here and now of interaction and translocal processes.

Bunda is a current expression in Brazilian Portuguese to refer to one's buttocks, especially female ones. It comes from Quimbundo, a language from the Bantu linguist Trunk spoken in Angola, brought in by enslaved Africans. Its history of use remounts to a colonial gaze over black women's bodies and their salient gluteus. Different studies discuss how "shapely buttocks of the populace" (BORBA & MILANI, 2019:10) have become a popular fetish in Brazil, indexing ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality. As a symbol of oppression and obsession (GONZALEZ, 1994), the designation *bunda* entered everyday Portuguese enmeshed in conflicting orders of indexicality (FABRÍCIO, 2014). It can either index a valued object of desire or a general negative attribute of low quality, as in *uma música bunda* (a lousy song). In both situations, the sign is correlated with a more vulgar register. However, when *bunda* precipitates in the banner, it exceeds colonial intertexts and performs reversal effects (BUTLER, 1997). It performs straight talk, intimacy, and connection between buddies who share a familiar repertoire.

4.4 Interscaling kinship

The textual practice under scrutiny in this section is a lesson on "register competence" (AGHA, 2007, p.146). It is a short video production by a Big Jaum, a black Brazilian standup comedian from Guadalupe, another peripheral

neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. It was posted on his Instagram profile on May 18, and it circulated on various social media, including the profile of MareVive on Instagram. His performance can be regarded as "a portable emblem of identity" (AGHA, 2007, p.146) as it interweaves a range of resources easily recognizable as a stereotypical form of speaking. His enactment of a peripheral guy speaking *favelese* cconstitutes a token of metapragmatic types associated with a historical register formation in Brazil.

The country's history of colonization shows that many Brazilians have inherited a fundamental oral legacy from the indigenous population and enslaved Africans. This inheritance has created patterns of phonetic, lexical, and syntactic elements that co-occur with patterning of kinesics (body motion communication), prosody, and interaction. Such features, which operate a contrast with "cultured" Portuguese uses, diachronically materialized in the way many African-Brazilians used (and still do) multiple semiosis—talk, music, and dance—to escape the control of masters or authorities (MUSSA; SIMAS, 2010). This is an interpretive key to approach textual-corporeal-interactional performances in the samba, rap, candomblé dance and other cultural contexts. They can be read as an insurgent communication model that is embodied as "pretoguês" (Black Portuguese), a shared system of semiotic devices not immediately accessible to traditionally-educated interlocutors (GONZALEZ, 1984).

Racial and class distinctions mark this sociolinguistic phenomenon in Brazil, configuring an enregistered style linked to stereotypic indexical values. Typification of accent, lexemes, intonation, and corporal movements identify semiotic activities that "litter" the norms of standard Portuguese. The fact that Big Jaum practices transgressive semiosis in the current scenario of Health crisis is indexical of a long-standing tradition of resistance to linguistic and cultural hegemony. This perception becomes more palpable when we break down his enregisterment of prevention protocols in a 1-minute-33-second video.

For analytic purposes, we have clipped the video into seven scenes and organized them on three-column tables (cf. Figures 8-11) that separate the visual, verbal, and sound dimensions (ROSE, 2000). Let us start by considering scenes 1 and 2 below.

Visual Dimension	Verbal Dimension	Sound Dimension
Scene 1	With the quarantine, Coronavirus and stuff, new <u>habits</u> came around. But how? We is wise, and we'll adapt, y'know?[14] *Com toda essa questão da quarentena e Coronavírus vieram novos <u>hábitos</u>. Mas como? Nós é sagaz, a gente vai se adaptar tá ligado?*	Instrumental music in the background that pauses when the actor says "wise".
Visual Dimension	Visual Dimension	Sound Dimension
Scene 2	So everyone's having to wear a MASK. *Então <u>todo</u> mundo tá tendo que usar MÁSCARA.*	Instrumental music in the background.

Figure 8. Big Jaum's performance

The artist wears a T-shirt, displaying a drawing of Popeye, the well-known cartoon character in the 1950's who invested all his strength and courage in protecting his girlfriend and facing everyday obstacles. Although the signage on the T-shirt may appeal to an older audience familiarized with the comics, Big Jaum's linguistic and interactional conduct speaks to younger people like himself.

In scene 1, his central position on the screen, in medium close-up, against a flat blue background draws attention to the contextualization of his message in the time-space of Covid-19 *With the quarantine, Coronavirus and stuff, new habits came around*. This focus is followed by the projection of a series of scalable qualities that reinforce the idea of rapport. In *We is wise, and we'll adapt, y'know?*, the co-occurrence of the pronoun "we", predication, non-standard grammar, and a colloquial filler word positions Big Jaum and his audience on the same wavelength. It is hence possible to interact with

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12. The notations used to indicate prosody and paralanguage were adapted from ATKINSON, J. e HERITAGE, J. (eds.)1984. Structures of social action: studies in *conversation analysis*. New York, Cambridge University Press. They are: underline for emphatic stress; CAPS for loudness; >text< spoken quickly; and (.) for micro pauses.

the next utterance, *everyone's having to wear a MASK* (scene 2) in a different key. Signs indicating a deontic proposition (a modal verb, stress on MASK, and the frowning accompanied by a protruding hand gesture) can be read as strong advice and encouragement from an insider. Moreover, the relaxing background music softens the blow of the disease without undermining its seriousness. The image of *Asian people* wearing masks, in spite of recycling wide-circulating assumptions concerning the origin of the virus, suggest joint action. Therefore, it functions as an invitation for collective mobilization and co-responsibility.

In scenes 3 and 4 (See Figures 9-10), there is a scale shift from the global crisis to its manifestation in a local setting. At this moment, the artist turns to a lexical register that contextualizes "straight talk between bros."

Visual Dimension	Verbal Dimension	Sound Dimension
Scene 3	But there's always <u>those guys</u> who are <u>JERKOFFS</u>. They're not wearing a mask as if life was a <u>strawberry</u>. But it ain't my bro. And you know that (.) <u>A bunch of irresponsible dumbasses</u>! *Mas tem o maior <u>blocão</u> que tá na MANCADA. Não tá usando máscara achando que a vida é um <u>morango</u>. Mas não é não, meu irmão. E tu tá ligado nisto(.) <u>Bando de vacilão irresponsável, inconsequente</u>!*	Instrumental music in the background. It stops when the actor says <u>bunch of irresponsible dumbasses</u>!

Figure 9. Big Jaum's performance

The use of evaluative categories as "jerkoffs", "dumbasses" and related actions "not wearing a mask" and being "irresponsible" composes a jargon that exhorts membership and participation in a community (SCHEGLOFF, 2007). In so doing, it fashions the reprimand as an assertive, but friendly, tip, signaled by "bro", emphasis, and the humorous contrast between the actual catastrophe and the sweetness of strawberries.

This movement is sharpened in scene 4 (See Figure 10). At this point, the performer addresses interlocutors who wear the mask incorrectly. They are grouped in three different categories: those who wear it under their chins; those who leave their noses unprotected; and those who cover their eyes with it. The

inappropriate behavior is highlighted by background images of wrong-doers and by the performer's gesture and facial expression suggesting sanction, a meaning indexed by the interruption of the background music.
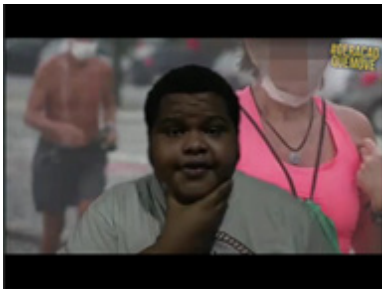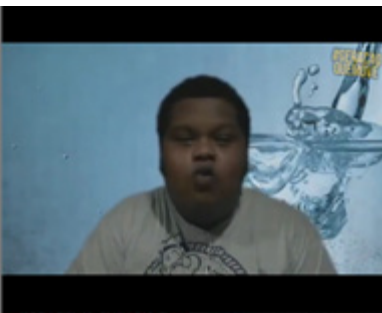
Visual Dimension	Verbal Dimension	Sound Dimension
 Scene 4	And there are those, y'know? who still don't know how things work and wear the mask incorrectly. There are people who wear the mask under their chin, or do not cover the nose. There are others who wear it over their eyes. *E também né? Ainda tem aquela galera que ainda não sabe das coisas e usa a máscara de forma incorreta. Tem gente que tá usando a máscara embaixo do queixo, ou então deixa o nariz pra fora. Ainda tem aquela galera que usa no olho.*	Instrumental music in the background. It stops when the actor says *"mask"*. Soccer jingle: *"Brazil-zil-zil-zil!"*
Visual Dimension	**Linguistic Dimension**	**Sound Dimension**
 Scene 5	There's something else, the mask shouldn't be a mess, okay? (.) As soon as you get home you have to wash it with water and soap. Get real (.) >It's not like your underwear that you wash every three days< bro. *Outra coisa, máscara não é bagunça, tá? (.) Tem que chegar em casa e lavar a máscara com água e sabão. Não tem jeito (.) >Não é igual às tuas cuecas que você fica três dias sem lavar < irmão.*	Instrumental music in the background that stops when the actor mentions "underwear".
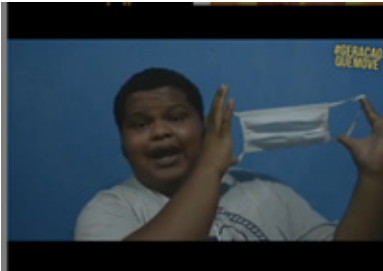
Figure 10. Big Jaum's performance

The sternness of the moment and the scolding are counter-balanced with a humorous key introduced by the famous jingle *Brazil-zil-zil-zil!* used to celebrate the goals scored by Brazilian soccer players in international competitions. The football

metaphor serves a dual purpose. It signals shared-knowledge and it aggregates participants around a national symbol, reinforcing the necessity of a common goal in the combat against Coronavirus. As such, it prefaces the admonition in the next scene, *There's something else, the mask shouldn't be a mess, okay?*

In scene 5, Big Jaum operates another scale shift. By discriminating a fourth group of careless individuals—males—he sustains the playful frame by engaging in verbal filth (BORBA & LOPES, 2018). The analogy between negligence of hygiene measures and *dirty underwear* "pollutes" his semiotic activity. Such a scalar maneuver, full of identity clichés, operates strategically. The easily recognizable stereotypical imagery blurs gender boundaries. The accelerated speech in "It's not like your underwear that you wash every three days" can be read as signaling straight talk. Communicating camaraderie and sympathy, it re-signifies *Get real* by reorganizing the order of indexicality of self-care, frequently discarded by men as a female grooming practice (HALL ET AL., 2012). This perception becomes clearer in the final scenes when Big Jaum explains how to handle the mask efficiently (see Figure 11).

Visual Dimension	Linguistic Dimension	Sound Dimension
 Scene 6	I'll do my best so that you can see how it's done. Always handle the mask by the elastic band. You won't mess it up. Look here, <u>big ear</u>. Done. No mystery. Check it out dude. Vou jogar da melhor forma pra vocês pegar a visão de como é que faz. Manuseia a máscara sempre pelo elástico. Tu não vai dá esse mole. Aqui oh, <u>orelhão.</u> Cabô. Não tem mistério. Então se liga tropinha.	Instrumental music in the background.

Visual Dimension	Linguistic Dimension	Sound Dimension
Scene 7	A mask is not a vaccine. If you can, <u>stay home</u> (.) And if you can't bro, follow the rules or you're <u>going down</u>. That's it. We're in this together! Máscara não é vacina. Se puder, fica em casa. E, se não puder, irmão, segue a regrinha senão tu vai tomar um <u>atraso</u>. É isso. Tamo junto!	Instrumental music in the background. It stops when the actor says "stay home."

Figure 11. Big Jaum's performance

In these last two scenes, Big Jaum alternates two registers. Signs indicating medical discourse (*Always handle the mask by the elastic band* and *A mask is not a vaccine*) get mixed with several colloquialisms (*You won't mess it up, check it out dude,* and *big ear*. This hybrid performance teaching "how-to" steps in a didactic way is consequential in important ways. It familiarizes interactants with prevention routines, contributing to the de-escalation of an unknown health disaster. The search for simplification and demystification is a scalar move signaled by *Done. No mystery. Check it out, dude.* Furthermore, it ascribes agency to subjects frequently dismissed as rubbish by public policies (GOMES, 2019). People's capacity for action is present in his final lines when, wearing a mask, he emphatically proposes *If you can, <u>stay home</u>.* In doing so, he recycles the widespread recommendation of social distancing. However, differently from the messages in Figures 5-7, he acknowledges the local difficulties of residents who have to move around.

All in all, Big Jaum overlaps scalar dimensions in communicating the global spread of a virus, its possible victims, and preventive practices. His semiotic activity interscales a larger social phenomenon and the down-to-earth perspective of the daily life of concrete individuals. One reinforces the other as they assert the need of prevention protocols. However, instead of a totalizing approach that naturalizes protective actions, they orient to particular time-space configurations. We contend that the interscalability and de-escalation in Jaum's performance enhances the imagination of kinship as central to meaning-making. Ultimately, it may make nervous conditions less stressful. The people we have interviewed have confirmed this perception. According to their view, the efforts to make communication accessible have helped citizens to minimize risks as much as possible, especially

in the first months. However, Gizele explains, "because of the recent relaxation of the rules, people have returned to the streets and we have to rethink our campaign so that they are aware that the pandemic is not over yet and they still have to be careful."

5. THE SEMIOTICS OF PRAGMATIC SURVIVAL

In her interview, community communicator Gizele Martins tells us the media "exclude us completely". Besides "there is prejudice concerning our language, they've been criminalizing our way of speaking for years." She and other residents in Maré demand communication that is responsive to the specificities of their territories. In her view, mainstream press reproduces racist and classist ideologies because they ignore the multiplicity of experiences and forms of meaning construction in the favelas. When they are topicalized in the news, they are scaled as criminalized and marginalized spaces, as it happened in a wide-circulating news report published online. It categorized Maré as a "bunker of criminals"[13]. Critical reactions invaded social media. Gizele herself affirmed ""We are 'bunkers' of solidarity, leisure, culture, work, research, community life, and community communication." A tweet on *Maré de Notícias* followed through, by attesting "Favelas are powerful. Community communication and local leaders have been developing projects and content for years, which the traditional media insist on ignoring."

This routinized way with texts strongly resonates with a modernist mode of action that has always been oblivious to the infinite forms of linguistic existence. As a scalar project that imagines itself as an expandable unitary block, the modern episteme disregards adaptions or adjustments to circumstances (TSING, 2012). On this trail, it imposes purity and cleanliness as parameters that discard diversity as garbage.

In this paper we have sought to change the scale that has been naturalizing social places and hierarchies of race and class in violent Brazilian democracy. We decided to investigate non-stream semiotic projects and their performative effects. By focusing on practices of "pragmatic survival" (OLIVEIRA, 2019), we have analyzed how *Maré Mobilization Front* has put efforts on semiotic labor to produce

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13. "Complexo da Maré concentra mais de 240 foragidos da Justiça; moradores vivem acuados", published by G1 on 26/08/2020. Available at <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/08/26/bunker-de-bandidos-complexo-da-mare-tem-244-foragidos-da-justica.ghtml?utm_campaign=rjtv&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter>

and disseminate communication material about Covid-19. The democratization of communication was their weapon of confrontation.

We have scrutinized how community communication has scaled its world in order to make sense of it as a collectivity. According to the people we have interviewed, the campaign was successful. It has informed dwellers about avoiding contagion and it has eased the fear of the unknown. Both actions have restrained the advance of contamination.

In this local journey to grapple with the health crisis, memories of historical struggles emerge reminding us that, in the local business of creating meaning, the interpenetration of different times and spaces may lead to social obliteration, when the force of habitus is in command, orienting text production to privileged audiences. However, remembering silenced stories is part of the very same dynamic, as the campaign we have explored here indicates. It reenacts a trail of creative reinvention and resistance. We have argued that strategic enregisterment and scaling were allies that fueled imagination. In particular, we have drawn attention to de-escalation processes and their crafting of memories of solidarity. This perception motivates our final word: de-escalation should be a protagonist on our research agendas and efforts to communicate. Our system of inequalities makes us all susceptible to "nervous" circumstances. The negotiation of adjustments in our daily interactions with texts may be the key to our survival in the midst of destructive ideologies. If de-escalation is to take center stage, we have to rethink how we have been communicating scholarly work and develop the versatility to deliver straight talk that is capable of reaching diverse audiences.

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APPENDIX 1

Official material from the campaigns of the State Government of Rio de Janeiro. Available at < https://coronavirus.rj.gov.br/material-da-campanha-impressos/>