

## **Relocating Development Communication: Social Entrepreneurship, International Networking, and South-South Cooperation in the Viva Rio NGO**

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*Keywords: communication for development and social change, social entrepreneurship, grassroots development; south-south cooperation*

### **Introduction**

Since shortly after the foundation of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now the World Bank) at the famous 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, activists and practitioners have attacked the way these organizations and others like them promote a highly bureaucratized brand of social change where “poverty, health, education, hygiene, employment and poor quality of life are turned into social problems, requiring extensive knowledge about the population and appropriate modes of social planning” (Escobar, 1992, p. 113). An integral part of this process has been the deployment of thousands of “development experts” (Murray-Li, 2007) generally trained in American diplomacy schools and then deployed globally. While critiques of the development industry and its “experts” have focused on a variety of issues including disregard for community input in design and implementation phases (Chambers, 1984), the implicit or explicit promotion of free-market economic ideologies (Elyachar, 2005), and inadequate consideration of cultural particularities in specific contexts (Escobar, 1995; Wilkins, 1999), they all register the same larger dynamic: An outside expert enters a local environment with a *development template* aimed at producing strategic change within local environs.

In recent years, community activists, disillusioned development experts, and philanthropic foundations have rallied around the relatively new discourse of social entrepreneurship as a way to reposition the locus of initiation in social change projects. In its most basic formulation, social entrepreneurship is a bottom-up process where individuals from local communities diagnose pressing local problems and innovative interventions to address identified problems (Bornstein & Davis, 2012; Dees, 1998). Drawing on projects like Muhamad Yunus’ pioneering microcredit programs at the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, supporters argue that the increasing global profile of groups engaging in this type of highly localized, grassroots development signals a shift toward the valorization of highly localized and culturally specific interventions (McAnany, 2012). To the degree that it frees local actors in the global south from the strictures of Western development practice, it opens up new possibilities for community-based social change.

Although the discourse of social entrepreneurship is founded on a staunch attack on Western development bureaucracies, almost all of these institutions (and many others) have apparently embraced its critique of Western-style development, ranging from the World Bank to Greenpeace (Navarrete Moreno, 2015). Despite this popularity, the contours of how a project fitting this description of social entrepreneurship is first designed and then networked locally and globally is rarely discussed—save for lionizing narratives about large projects like the Grameen Bank or Barefoot College (Bornstein, 2003; Elkington & Hartigan, 2008). Drawing on the Rio de Janeiro-based nongovernmental organization Viva Rio, this article will attempt to track how a project working within a marginalized area expands from a local intervention to a global actor with stakes in various projects.

### **Viva Rio: A Community Development NGO for the Favelas of the World**

Viva Rio started in 1993 as a loose network of activists in the city of Rio de Janeiro committed to fighting the growing violence between municipal police and groups of organized drug traffickers who occupied the city's favelas, or unincorporated urban slums. From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, Viva Rio steadily grew to become a local provider in favelas for health programs, police sensitivity training, public Internet access (in the form of telecenters), vocational training, cultural activities including music and sports, and a series of other projects. As Viva Rio's work in Rio's favelas began to accrue international attention, the group expanded to create programs in other parts of Brazil, in South American nations including Paraguay and Venezuela, and in other locations including Port Au Prince, Haiti, and Vancouver, Canada. This evolution from local to national to transnational NGO has been facilitated by sizable grants from large multilaterals like the United Nations and the Inter-American Development Bank; aid programs sponsored by national governments from Venezuela, Norway (Norwegian Council of Charitable Churches), Canada (IDRC); international foundations such as the Soros Open Society Institute and the Ashoka Foundation; corporate social responsibility wings of AMBEV and others; and sizable allocations from municipal and state governments (Lucas, 2013; McCann, 2008; United Nations Development Program, 2005; Viva Rio, 2013a). Viva Rio's ability to flourish in international development circles bestowed a large amount of prestige on the group's ability to be what group founders have called "more of a network between local communities and global resources than a traditional NGO" (R. Lapa, personal correspondence, August 4, 2013; Yúdice, 2009). In short, Viva Rio has been very successful at branding itself as a transnationally oriented NGO that can work in multiple local contexts.

By presenting itself from its earliest stages as a community development agent that centers its work in low-income, politically unstable regions instead of on particular forms of intervention, the group has been able to accomplish what international relations theorist Clifford Bob (2005, 2012) argues separates local projects that are financially and politically successful in the world of international donors and ones that are not: the ability to create and circulate a broadly defined group identity that appeals to multiple sets of potential supporters. By creating and branding an image of itself as a one-stop shop for a plethora of community-based development projects, Viva Rio has been able to brand itself as a development subcontractor specializing in community-based interventions within precarious regions.

This article examines how Viva Rio grew from a Rio-based citizen's coalition in 1993 to a highly professionalized NGO with a \$150 million annual budget, staff of more than 1,000 employees, and

projects in six different countries, including a permanent office in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Viva Rio's success is linked to both macro-level transformations in the development industry away from professional-led interventions and the group's ability to depict its activities in a manner attractive to international interlocutors. The combination of these two factors facilitated the rapid ascension of Viva Rio from a local initiative to a global development player.

### **Finding a Place for Viva Rio: From Specialized Intervention to Social Entrepreneurship in the Development Industry**

Viva Rio's global expansion was predicated on a fundamental reconfiguration of the international development industry in the late 1990s and early 2000s away from a discourse of professional development implemented by highly trained specialists with little knowledge of the locations where they work to one of nonprofessional, grassroots interventions generated by a growing group of social entrepreneurs who often come from marginalized areas. Viva Rio's international expansion began during a time when many international organizations including the World Bank and the United Nations were facing considerable pressure from civil society to incorporate local voices and perspectives and when NGO-based development was ballooning because the Cold War bipartite system was crumbling (Easterly, 2007). The decline of professionalized development institutions and the rise of multinational NGOs including Amnesty International and Greenpeace as the torchbearers for civil society created a geopolitical configuration in the development scene that made a broad-based yet profoundly grassroots organization like Viva Rio a candidate for so many projects.

The expert approach to development can be traced to the increasing growth of large, multi-issue agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and the United Nations. Tasked with promoting and overseeing modernization, these agencies grew in size and geographical scope. Hand in hand with this growth came a new approach to development according to a logic that privileged bureaucratic management and professionalization of development protocols and practices (Escobar, 1995). The professionalized bureaucracy met opposition from its very inception. The loudest cries against it came from grassroots or local activists and community leaders in the nations who were supposed to be receiving aid (Esteva & Prakash, 1998). Although its members came from various locales, this loose group unified around a general unwillingness to compromise with the institutions of international development. For critics, the professional bias of these institutions produced a form of what Walter Rodney (1974) famously labeled "structured underdevelopment": the formation of a financial, political, and cultural infrastructure that constructs and maintains a rigid structural division between development "experts" and underdeveloped "students."

For many critics the antidote to this structural pathology is the recovery of traditions and practices eclipsed by development. Examining a few of the leading proponents of this discourse, known as the "autonomist school," illustrates the radicality of the break they propose. Esteva and Prakash (1998) argue that development is an extension of colonialism's attempt to erase indigenous knowledge in order to recondition local subjects. As an antidote, they propose creating programs within local communities that teach pre-colonial forms of education, cosmology, agriculture, and other practices. Similarly, Mignolo (1999) claims that the colonial encounter produced immeasurable havoc on religious, political, economic,

and cultural forms across the globe. For many activists who have explicitly dealt with the transition from “traditional” to “modern” in marginalized communities, the unsophisticated way these autonomist theorists conceptualize the “outside” of modernization as space of resistance is of little use for understanding the position of subaltern groups within contemporary economic and political processes (Garcia-Canclini, 2014). Some have even argued that alternatives provided by this group are so out of touch with lived reality that “to call this type of work ‘theories of alternative development’ becomes a misnomer as no alternatives are ever offered” (Nederveen-Pieterse, 2000, p. 176).

The pushbacks that have received the most serious attention from development institutions have generally come from disillusioned or disaffected practitioners. These critics (see Easterly, 2007) often draw on firsthand experiences of the disconnect between global institutions and local beneficiaries to advocate for a drastic increase in local planning and implementation. Many advocate *social entrepreneurship* as a theoretical and practical avenue for facilitating this increase. Although the discourse has largely lionized biographies or popular how-to guides (Bornstein, 2003; Bornstein & Davis, 2012), a few theoretical accounts posit key features that are shared by most social entrepreneurs. McAnany (2012) points out a few criteria underpinning this development practice, including “*creativity* (the creation of a new and original idea about how to solve a significant social problem that has tested in the field); *entrepreneurial value* (not satisfied until the idea works locally and is spread to the whole country or particular arena of application), and *social impact of idea* (others like the idea, and it leads to greater scale and adoption by many)” (2012, pp. 111–112; emphasis added). This definition presents the formula for successful social entrepreneurship: a combination of innovation through the contribution of the local entrepreneur and an astute consideration of his or her role in the local social, political, and economic environment.

Social entrepreneurship’s flexible approach toward development practice has won favor in a variety of circles. Beyond its popularity within professional development institutions, it has also been declared a best-practices model by philanthropic organs including the Ashoka and Ford Foundations, the Open Society Institute, and the PATH Global Health Foundation. This growth has potentially created a new environment within development communication where local projects have become increasingly fashionable. Viva Rio’s ascension from Rio-based intervention to a multifocal, global development actor might not have been possible without this transformation.

### **The Marketing Approach to International Networking**

If the growing popularity of social entrepreneurship provides the discursive background for Viva Rio’s expansion, it does not explain the specific strategies the NGO uses. Addressing this element entails a discussion of theories of transnational networking in social movement theory. Most theorists argue that the process usually follows what Keck and Sikkink (1998) call the *advocacy boomerang*. The boomerang occurs when groups representing marginalized communities use communication campaigns to spread word of their struggles to commiserating international audiences. The boomerang then returns to the original site when international supporters pressure political leaders or international NGOs to put pressure on local authorities (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). This popular model accommodates many political struggles, including the Tibetan and Burmese freedom movements, in which local activists called on international

audiences to pressure national governments to step in and apply diplomatic pressure or (in extreme cases) impose economic sanctions. However, this model falls short when addressing how a grassroots project with a long-term agenda that speaks to a number of political, economic, and cultural issues builds and maintains support.

For a project to continue past a discrete objective, it must develop an overt focus on securing funding, making institutional connections, and participating in transnational NGO networks. Clifford Bob's *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (2005) offers an extensive analysis of how a local group's ability to display certain attributes that attract support can determine the survival or destruction of initiatives. Starting from the assumption that financial and political support for local projects is drastically lower than the need for support, he uses market theory to lay out a series of factors that determine which local groups can "win" the zero-sum game of international support.

In Bob's account, the three main factors influencing the ability to garner international support are *size of financial base*, *international standing of group members*, and *value/strategy-based marketing*. The first two of these are largely self-explanatory. If the group has wealthy members committed to spending on the cause, it will be able to leverage the personal assets of semi-affluent or affluent members in order to pay for legal work, campaign materials, public relations, and a host of other activities. Similarly, if the group contains or is sanctioned by a figure with international repute, potential international supporters will feel significantly more comfortable supporting the project. The third factor, marketing, is the most complex but also the element that allows for the largest degree of strategic planning on the part of the grassroots group. Table 1 draws from Bob's work to illustrate the different attributes or strategies that are likely to invite donor support or alienate donors.

From the perspective of goals, the most important element is proving that one's group represents a problem that affects a disenfranchised constituency. The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional's 20-year-long transformation from Marxist guerilla agitator to representative of local communities in Chiapas provides Bob's archetypical example of proving awareness of community issues. Once this awareness is proven, the next stage consists of the group attempting to frame its project in a way that resonates with issues deemed important to transnational NGOs and other actors. Focusing on how the Zapatista strategy largely consisted of reframing radical or revolutionary claims into those more resonant with social movements, Bob (2005) argues that their ability to generate global support significantly increased when they downplayed their call for a regime change in Mexico in favor of objectives based in environmentalism and indigenous rights. In what might be the most overtly pragmatic or even cynical element of his analysis, Bob argues that local groups who mirror their governance structures on those popular or in fashion with NGOs in the global north often are able to leverage this element when asking for support. For example, groups that have an elected board of directors that is the result of equal inclusion practices and regular elections are strong contenders for support. For the Zapatistas, a lack of formalized democratic governance structure was compensated for by a rhetorical focus on inclusion regardless of gender or ethnicity and the lack of president or formal head—the "commandante" of the Zapatistas has always been "the people" (Bob, 2005). Finally, strategies adopted by local groups plays possibly the most important role in generating support: carefully crafted public relations or media plans that are able to encapsulate group activities in a concise yet provocative manner can multiply the audience for a certain group. The

creation of "Subcomandante Marcos" as the pipe smoking, rugged-yet-erudite former college professor turned activist played a major part in the spread of the Zapatista cause through Internet and news media channels.

**Table 1. Table Illustrating How a Local Project Draws in Support Through Value- and Strategy-Based Marketing (taken from Bob, 2005, 2007).**

<b>Element of Marketing</b>	<b>Attributes Likely to Receive Support</b>	<b>Attributes Unlikely to Receive Support</b>
Locus of initiation	Rootedness in local context; proof that group knows what goals fit the community.	Disconnect between aim of project and issues facing local community.
Goals	Goals reflecting new social movement issues including human rights, environmentalism, women's rights, equal access to health and education.	Call for regime change; call for potentially politically divisive changes.
Organizational characteristics and structures of governance	Democratic governance measures; community outreach; public budget reports.	Opaque decision-making processes; composition of NGO drawing too heavily on supporters from a certain area or political party.
Strategies	Public relations or media campaigns with charismatic spokespeople; attempts to promote transformations in globally sanctioned manner (i.e., pushing for electoral change); partnership in participation in large civil society conferences such as the World Social Forum or various UN multi-sector meetings.	Anything that even hints at embracing or supporting armed struggle, including even loose affiliations with armed insurgents or revolutionary forces.

Being able to maximize the positive elements of strategic networking while avoiding the damaging connotations of the negative (i.e., that a group is "undemocratic," "violent," or "factious") allows a local project to successfully negotiate the world of international support. And, as the Zapatista example illustrates, this type of support can provide the material and symbolic support to sustain local interventions facing unresponsive or even repressive political conditions.

### **A History of Viva Rio's Global Networking 1993–2013**

To track Viva Rio's ascension from local initiative to globally recognized pioneer in social entrepreneurship, we must engage with the strategy behind its ambitious networking. Drawing on a series of interviews conducted with NGO founders, project leaders, and internal public relations staff and an analysis of written and audiovisual artifacts including press releases, funding reports, PowerPoint presentations, and promotional videos, the remainder of this article will attempt to track how the group incorporated community outreach and multi-stakeholder governance into its local projects, pitched its local successes to international organizations, and eventually redeveloped Rio-based development projects in other locales.

The opening line of a speech delivered by founder Rubem César Fernandes at the NGO's one-year anniversary signals the group's commitment to inclusiveness and an open-ended definition of development: "Viva Rio is working on the simple, elementary things that unite us all, despite our many differences of opinion, ideology, religion, and politics" (César Fernandes, 1994, p. 26). In its original form, Viva Rio was not an NGO but an ad hoc group of community leaders and public figures formed to stage public events to decry the escalating cycle of violence in Rio's favelas. Although their proximity to formal neighborhoods within the city of Rio has always led to a contentious history with the city, unrest in the late 1980s led to a surge in armed violence (Arias, 2006). This surge was linked to national and local issues. The burgeoning domestic drug trade at the end of the military dictatorship led to a spike in the trafficking of cocaine and marijuana through the city. Because of the city's historical unwillingness or inability to incorporate favelas, these areas became strategic sites for a growing number of narcotics traffickers. As the traffickers continued to solidify their presence in favelas in the early 1990s, Rio police launched increasingly violent and indiscriminate raids on certain favela communities deemed "strategic targets" (Downey, 2008). This violence came to a symbolic crescendo in July 1993 when a group of off-duty police officers opened fire on a group of 20 street children (killing eight) supposedly connected to the drug trade who were sleeping in front of Candelaria Cathedral in downtown Rio. This event instigated the formation of the first Viva Rio march for peace, planned and organized by a variety of local actors including favela community leaders and members of civil society.

The initial march precipitated a surge in public attention and new community interventions within favelas. In 1994, a group of leaders from the Viva Rio mobilizations established an NGO, also called Viva Rio, to coordinate activities. As an intermediary actor perched between the worlds of favela activism and academic research, Viva Rio has garnered accolades from individuals ranging from William Gardner, the Latin American director of the UNDP, to Hugo Chavez, former president of Venezuela. Analyzing some of its largest projects from the last 20 years through Bob's framework of strategic networking elucidates how the group's flexible approach to community development generated multiple types of intervention. Viewed chronologically, we can see a progression from individually generated Rio-based projects to projects based in non-Brazilian sites and accomplished through increasingly complex partnerships with development institutions and national aid programs. Because a simple chronology of its many activities in Brazil and abroad over the last 21 years would span dozens of pages, this article offers a selective discussion of four strategic activities:

1. Draws upon local outreach to build strong connections with other favela-based NGOs instead of focusing on single issues.
2. Embraces new social movement goals including gun control/anti-small arms trade activism and environmental protection.
3. Invests heavily in public relations activities such as co-sponsorship of other NGO projects in Brazil and participation in civil society meetings and summits.
4. Adopts structures of governance that include community membership on board of directors and local outreach for input on projects.

### ***1. Building Local Outreach: 1994–2000***

Returning to Bob's framework, the element of strategic marketing that predicates all other elements is proof of local effectiveness. To gain international support, projects must show that they have had measurable success at meeting the needs and wishes of local constituents. Viva Rio accomplished this by either launching or providing support for a series of community-based initiatives in favelas. Between 1994 and 1998 Viva Rio offered volunteer staff, publicity, fundraising, and intellectual mentorship for 18 different cultural projects started in Rio's favelas (R. Lapa, personal communication, September 20, 2013). In the process, it helped promote two of the highest profile groups: the percussion and musical performance group AfroReggae in Vigário Geral, and the Luta Pela Paz (Fight for Peace) boxing gym and combat-sports program in Complexo de Maré.

These two projects much more clearly illustrate the intimate relationship between Viva Rio's holistic brand of multi-issue community development and extensive collaboration with groups in favela communities. The most famous, AfroReggae, grew out of the public crisis that created Viva Rio. The group was started by Anderson Sa, a former drug trafficker and musician from the Vigário Geral favela in Rio's northern suburbs, and José Junior, a local entrepreneur who had been both working in cultural NGOs and managing hip-hop bands since the early 1980s. As a community activist from Vigário Geral, Sa was heavily involved with Viva Rio vigils and workshops on police violence. Though not a favela resident himself, Junior began organizing musical festivals in the 1980s and in 1992 founded the Rasta Reggae Dancing day, a festival that more than 15,000 attended. Working together, Sa and Junior founded the group to serve Vigário Geral through combination of cultural programming such as music and dance coordinated by Sa and community development programming coordinated by Junior that included literacy and job skills classes, HIV-prevention and rehabilitation programs for crack users, and vaccinations for pets (Junior, 2010). AfroReggae has now grown to the point where it can support various international programs ranging from a favela-based circus that toured Europe in early 2014 to police sensitivity training in Venezuela in May 2013. Although Viva Rio collaborated with AfroReggae for a only short time, many of the original directors of Viva Rio cite the group as a major influence on how they conceptualize the relationship between building ties with local communities and assessing what type of intervention the community requires (César Fernandes, 1994).

Luta Pela Paz (Fight for Peace), founded by British expatriate sociologist Luke Dowdney in 1997, offers a holistic approach to community development that combines training in combat sports (including



boxing and jujitsu) with courses in English acquisition, computer skills, and vocational training and public health clinics (UNDP, 2002). Located in the Complexo de Máre, considered the most precarious favela in Rio because of its position as a point of intersection between all three major trafficking gangs, Fight for Peace received financial and professional support from Viva Rio in early stages. Like AfroReggae, it adopted a strategy that combined recreational activities aimed to deter young (and largely male) favela residents from participating in the drug trade with education in both applied/vocational training classes and more conceptually oriented classes aimed at providing cultural literacy through discussion of topics such as the negative impact of the drug trade on poor communities and the history of racism against Afro-Brazilian populations.

Fight for Peace's collaboration with Viva Rio attracted a great deal of early attention from the international development industry for what Viva Rio projects were accomplishing in favelas. Praising Fight for Peace for its innovative approach to informal education, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) launched a study to analyze how the project developed its training protocols, recruitment strategies, and curriculum. This resulted in the publication of *Youth at Risk: The Fight for Peace Methodologies Manual* (UNDP, 2005), a guidebook for combining sports and civic education that has been translated into six languages. This guide initiated what would become an ongoing collaborative relationship between Viva Rio and the UNDP. Viva Rio's deployment of culture as a way to approach development activities struck a chord with the UNDP, long considered to be the organization's most community-centric and locally responsive wing, which has been increasingly looking at how to use cultural activities to promote civic engagement in precarious areas (Murphy, 2006).

Although questions might be raised regarding the long-term impact of Viva Rio's local projects in producing social and political changes in Rio's favelas, the group has been resoundingly successful at generating international focus on its perceived ability to use innovative cultural strategies to promote development activities and provide health-care and security services in communities that other development actors had long considered inaccessible.

## **2. Embracing New Social Movement (NSM) Issues: Gun Control and Environmental Protection 1994–2014**

Beginning in the late 1990s, Viva Rio expanded its work from favela-based community development projects to lobbying for nationwide reform in areas related to the arms trade, environmental protection, and other topics that fit within the terrain of new social movements (NSMs). For Melucci (1989) and others, one of the primary differences between old (or "historical") social movements and NSMs comes from the way each type of movement defined its constituencies. Historical social movements represent the wishes of a certain group of usually disenfranchised actors. Accordingly, the goals of these movements often focus on achieving political gains on the behalf of the subject population. NSMs, on the other hand, do not often represent a single constituency. Instead, they are characterized by an engagement with issues that are considered to affect large swathes of or the entire human population. Some central NSM concerns include discrimination based on gender and sexual identity, environmental degradation and destruction, nuclear weapons proliferation, the international arms trade, and more

recently, issues of communication rights and fair access to information online (Melucci, 1989). From this position, the main goal is to create policy conditions that will address these concerns that are considered to have universal applicability.

Considering Viva Rio through the framework of traditional versus new social movements, we can see that its earliest phases resonated with the traditional social movement framework to the degree that it explicitly claimed to be a change agent acting on behalf of favela residents. However, its international collaborations in the late 1990s coincided with a growing interest in issues that much more closely reflect an NSM approach. Viva Rio's main interventions in this regard were gun control and anti-international arms trade activism and environmental protection and conservation. Working in these areas helped expand the group's global profile as it was able to translate the work it had accomplished in Rio de Janeiro in explicitly international terms.

Like so many of its other activities, Viva Rio's turn toward gun-control activism was articulated in terms of an organic scaling up of its experiences working in favelas (Bob, 2012; César Fernandes, 2008). Although this focus grew out of the group's effort to deescalate violent confrontations between favela-based traffickers and Rio police, the NGO did not explicitly develop a pro-gun control position until much later. As César Fernandes (2008) describes in an essay on the history of gun control in Brazil, Viva Rio leadership (largely composed of "left-wing veterans of the dictatorship era" [p. 204]) were reluctant to get involved with arms-control policies administered by a national government that had until very recently been controlled by an authoritarian military regime.

The group's engagement with gun-control policy began in the late 1990s when the national government invited a number of high-profile NGOs to participate in discussions on legislation regarding gun control (Bob, 2012). These sessions sparked the group's interest in working for policy changes restricting gun control. Rationalizing this change, César Fernandes argued that the group was acting through its long-standing belief that the uncontrolled sale and distribution of arms within Brazil was one of the root causes of endemic violence in favelas. As a concern facing all Brazilian citizens, this issue united government and civil society (César Fernandes, 2008).

In the early 2000s, Viva Rio created a series of campaigns that invited topical experts from a huge number of other countries and international organizations to help draft a Brazilian gun-control policy. It also worked with transnational gun-control advocacy groups such as the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) to hold a series of workshops and publicity events to raise public awareness about the dangers of uncontrolled gun distribution. The symbolic pinnacle of these endeavors was a successful campaign by IANSA and Viva Rio to get the UN to declare July 9 the annual "Small Arms Destruction Day" (Bob, 2012).



**Figure 1. Publicity photo from Viva Rio's 2002 celebration of "Small Arms Destruction Day." César Fernandes (far right) and other Viva Rio members are getting ready to surrender their guns to a metalsmith as part of a symbolic performance. Photo Courtesy Viva Rio.**

Viva Rio's involvement in firearms legislation and anti-small arms distribution is ongoing, including a highly publicized series of workshops launched by the NGO's gun policy expert Antônio Rangel Bandeira in Venezuela and Colombia—areas historically dominated by the small-guns trade (Viva Rio, 2013b).

Although less coherently integrated into the group's philosophical vision than its work on gun control, Viva Rio's work in environmental protection and conservation has featured a number of workshops and policy proposals conducted with international partners. The largest project has been a multi-country preservation, ecotourism, and reforestation campaign directed at preserving and rehabilitating the Atlantic Rainforest. This campaign, launched as a partnership with the Oswald Cruz Foundation (the largest scientific research center in Brazil), featured a series of interventions in five Brazilian states and in portions of Paraguay and Argentina. Viva Rio's rationale for starting this program again reiterated the local specificity of the group's concern by arguing that the Atlantic Rainforest provides the natural background on which many of Rio's favelas were constructed (Lapa, personal communication, August 4, 2013).

Maintaining a healthy environment for this rainforest was intimately linked with environmental concerns within Rio's favelas. Between 2010 and 2013, this project worked throughout the Atlantic Rainforest to create eight permanent environmental protection centers that offer training classes on conservation, recycling, gardening, and ecotourism and include greenhouses in which to cultivate seedlings to be replanted. The project had also created 173 full-time positions for forest rangers in these areas and coordinated the replanting of 17,000 saplings as of May 2013 (Viva Rio, 2013b). The results of this project have been featured at a series of international meetings, and the project was featured as an example of best practices for community-based conservation at the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro (R. Lapa, personal communication, August 4, 2013).

In both gun control and environmental protection, Viva Rio has developed strategies to tie its local commitments to transnational conversations. Furthermore, in working on relatively noncontroversial issues that speak more to the universalist values of NSMs, the group was able to gain international support without fear of alienating partners by taking positions that might be seen as overly controversial or partisan.

### **3. Public Relations and the Branding of Viva Rio, 1994-2014**

Viva Rio's focus on public relations and networking with large NGOs has provided a central vehicle for turning its multifocal approach to community development into a tool that can be used for garnering support. Using a 10-person public relations team, Viva Rio has made a consistent effort to create publicized partnerships since its inception (R. Lapa, personal communication, August 2, 2013). When planning the first march against police violence in 1994, the group created and distributed to participants white T-shirts that contained what would become the Viva Rio logo. Since then, Viva Rio has made a point of sponsoring and financially supporting as many favela-related activities in Rio as it possibly can. As of August 2013, the NGO sponsored between 60–70 municipal or regional events a year (Viva Rio, 2013a). The NGO has also been very active in a variety of international civil society meetings and summits in Brazil and beyond: In 2013, it sent members or partners to events or workshops in Vancouver, Oslo, Berlin, and Caracas. It has also been active in hosting events aimed at international audiences. For example, in October 2012 it hosted an International Day of Peace at its Haiti branch and invited representatives from Human Rights Watch, UNICEF, the Ford Foundation, and other international NGOs. While it casts a wide net in its attempt to strengthen its network, it only directs its invitations for participation in line with projects it is supporting in Rio. This crucial element of its networking strategy is an attempt to maintain coherence between its local projects and international work.

As part of its attempt to maintain transparency for funders and other interested parties, Viva Rio has also made a point of presenting its budgets in annual reports—many of which are available on its website. Though a seemingly straightforward task, the act of making budgets is not a universally shared practice among NGOs in the global south, particularly in the Brazilian context.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, opening

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<sup>1</sup> For an extended discussion of the political economic scene for NGO funding in Brazil with special attention paid to favelas, please see Wendy Sinek (2012), *The Money Trap: NGO Funding and Political Action in Brazil's Favelas*. Chapter 6 explicitly mentions Viva Rio.

financial records becomes a strategic move designed to differentiate the NGO from others in the same arena. Viva Rio's emphasis on public transparency also facilitates media exposure through participation in contests like the Human Rights Foundation's "Top Ten Global NGOs" that require annual budgets with revenue and expenditures, employment salaries, and related items (R. Lapa, personal communication, August 4, 2013).

#### **4. Fostering Community-Based Multi-stakeholder Governance: Viva Rio Haiti 2005-2014**

Out of all of Viva Rio's international networking projects, its Haiti program (called "Viva Rio Haiti") offers the most explicit example of how the group exports its approach based on location (*not* issues). In this project, Viva Rio launched in Bel Air versions of more than 10 of the projects it had created in Rio, including the opening of community health centers, daycares, and public-access Internet centers and the creation of youth martial arts and music programs. From the NGO's perspective, Haiti became a place where it could create new versions of the community-based development projects launched in the favelas in the 1990s. As part of its 20-year celebration in July 2013, Viva Rio included a video showcasing the first eight years of its Viva Rio Haiti program. A substantial part of the film was narrated in English by William Gardner, director of the UNDP's Haiti branch. In the introduction to the film, Gardner offers an extremely useful example of how the UN and other IOs perceive Viva Rio's strengths as a development agent. He begins the film with this statement:

The difference between Viva Rio and any other development organization is impressive. They have lived in slums [favelas], with people from slums. Unlike the UN, which is built in a hierarchical fashion, they hold on to the idea that the beneficiaries in Haiti are on the same level as the Viva Rio workers. (Gardner, cited in Viva Rio, 2013a, p. 7)

This statement encapsulates the attractiveness of Viva Rio to the "post-development" era development industry. Its ability to act as a mediator between local communities and outside development actors in Rio de Janeiro proved attractive to IOs.

In 2004, the UNDP invited Viva Rio to help deal with disaster relief in Port Au Prince by creating a community center that would provide a wide range of community assistance projects including emergency relief shelters, first aid, food and water distribution, and medical assistance. After a few months, the UNDP asked the organization to continue the project, which ultimately became an internationally registered NGO in Haiti called "Viva Rio Haiti." The project now offers a multitude of services including public health, community garbage collection and sanitation, English classes, and a variety of cultural activities such as theater, capoeira, and dance. Drawing heavily on experiences accrued in Rio and other sites, this project has been conceptualized as the next stage of Viva Rio.

The major difference between Viva Rio and Viva Rio Haiti is the composition of leaders and workers within the project. Unlike the original NGO, Viva Rio Haiti was not launched by a group of public intellectuals, academics, and activists and later staffed by professional members. During initial stages, teams of paid professionals and volunteers from Viva Rio and UNDP trained community members to lead the various aspects of the project. As of 2013, Viva Rio Haiti's staff was composed largely of local

residents who occupied coordination and training positions in the group. This shift toward local governance reflects one of the central strategies Bob (2005) lays out for successful networking: to show that your cause represents in a democratic fashion the interests of those it claims to serve. By turning governance largely over to local stakeholders, Viva Rio has strengthened the group's reputation for promoting community-based development in a way that considers the particularities of a given geographical, political, and cultural space.

### **Conclusion: Assessing Impacts and Raising Questions for Further Research**

Viva Rio's marketing has been discussed thus far in terms of its ability to secure financial and political support, and it is important to address the continued impacts of this process on the group's work, particularly within Rio. Turning briefly to these projects illustrates the benefits and difficulties of this approach. By far the most significant return on investment from the group's expansion has been the continued growth of Viva Comunidade, its network of community health centers and emergency-care clinics within favelas. Created in the late 1990s using funding from the city government and the IDB, this program has a dual focus on providing free frontline health care to favelas and training community members to work as health agents. Building on the NGO's historical ties with community organizations in favelas, Viva Comunidade has created 60 clinics and trained more than 4,000 health agents, including those in more than 700 new positions in 2015 (Concursos RJ, 2015; Viva Rio, 2013a). For this program, the group's status as a nonprofit has allowed it to adopt a more flexible financial and organizational model than health projects designed and administered exclusively by public actors (R. Lapa, personal communication, August 4, 2013). Another project, Jovem Aprendiz (Young Apprentice), has benefited even more from Viva Rio's networking projects. Partnered with Coca-Cola, alcoholic beverage manufacturer AmBEV, pharmaceutical company Merck and Co., and other multinational corporations, this project offers vocational training courses for favela residents in areas ranging from metalwork to marketing to customer service (Viva Rio, 2013a, 2013b). Like the public health program, this project has steadily extended the availability and breadth of its offerings. It is crucial to note that the success of these programs in creating projects and training centers across the municipality of Rio distinguishes them from the majority of favela-based development projects that are highly localized to single communities (Perlman, 2010). Viva Rio's expansive financial and human resources enabled these types of large-scale, long-term initiatives.

Although projects like Viva Comunidade and Jovem Aprendiz illustrate the benefits of scaling up for strengthening and expanding local projects, other factors indicate the difficulties potentially associated with the networking process. Viva Favela, a digital media production program and website launched in 2001, has experienced a tumultuous history as it has cycled through a series of leadership conflicts. As different sets of staff members entered and left the project, its orientation fluctuated from a collaborative space for favela residents to an advocacy site directed at issues within Rio de Janeiro to an aggregator for national and international news coverage of favela issues (Davis, 2015). Although not related to a specific project, another potential issue associated with expansion is the loss of trust or confidence on the part of former collaborators and community activists. As Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernández (2013), Sinek (2012), and the UNDP (2005) have argued, Viva Rio's extensive cooperation with international, national, and local governmental actors might potentially reflect an ambivalence in the group's political ideology or

affiliation. More specifically, the group's willingness to collaborate with partners like the IDB and the municipal government in Rio has raised concerns over cooptation within the NGO.

Addressing these two less "successful" elements raises important issues related to professionalization of staff and deracination from original political focus. Since its earliest stages, Viva Rio has displayed a development agenda highly customized to the interests of its leadership. As many of its early projects were created directly through personal interactions of group leaders with community members, the project's growth created new issues at the local level. As the group expanded its topical and geographical scope, its budget grew, and its staff grew from around 150 in 1995 to almost 5,000 in 2013 (Viva Rio, 2013b). This growth in personnel raised new issues related to communication between different levels of the organization, locus of initiation and design for new programs, employee management within separate wings, and other areas not often associated with grassroots development (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). These shifts in organizational composition and function and political affiliation necessitate a more complex theoretical understanding of how community-development NGOs and social entrepreneurship projects transform as they scale up. From a conceptual perspective, this seems anathema to the nature of a type of project that usually focuses on immediate results. As Manuel Castells argues, highly localized community development projects like Viva Rio have historically centered on "practical matters, specific cases, and concrete expression of human solidarity" where "a positive output must be considered in itself, not as a way of moving in a positive direction" (2008, p. 85).

As social entrepreneurs like Viva Rio gain prominence in the global development arena, it becomes necessary to understand how this process works through a combination of strategically aligning group objectives with larger social movements, building collaborative partnerships with multiple types of organization within a variety of geographical areas, and maintaining active public relations campaigns. At the same time, these organizations need to be further interrogated in terms of the organizational and political transformations experienced when moving out from their locus of initiation. This article has analyzed the movement from the local to the global. Addressing the return to the local entails a continuous examination of the management issues and ideological fluctuations that occur when a project designed as a pragmatic intervention becomes a major actor in the world of international development.

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