Do Rio

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Do RIO

Master's in Entrepreneurial Journalism
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Abstract

Do Rio is a solutions journalism platform for residents of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It consists of a website and Facebook page where Rio de Janeiro’s citizens find inspiring stories of people who found solutions for their city’s problems, exchange ideas about the challenges Rio faces and take part in events with positive impact. This project was created by Barbara Marcolini at the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism as part of her Master’s in Entrepreneurial Journalism at the CUNY J-School.
Cariocas in search of a better city
About

Do Rio is a platform where Rio de Janeiro’s citizens find **inspiring stories** of people who found **solutions** for their city’s problems, exchange **ideas** about the challenges Rio faces and take part in **events** with **positive impact**. We believe that solutions journalism can help citizens improve their own communities. This project was created by [Barbara Marcolini](mailto:barbara.marcolini@nyu.edu) at the [Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism](https://www.tow-knightcenter.org/), as part of her Master’s in Entrepreneurial Journalism at [CUNY J-School](http://j-school.cuny.edu/). It was co-founded by Ricardo Acioli.

You can find here the journey that lead to this platform’s development:
- [The Challenge of Rewriting the News](https://www.tow-knightcenter.org/topics/solutionsjournalism)
- [Why I’m Building a Solutions-Focused Platform For People in Rio de Janeiro](https://medium.com/)
- [I Need to Talk About Rio](https://www.tow-knightcenter.org/)
- [What I Learned Building My First Startup](https://www.tow-knightcenter.org/)

Want to **dive deeper**? See our [presentation deck](https://deck.com) or our [one-page summary](https://www.summary.com).

Have questions, comments or advice? **Say hi** at [contato@do-rio.com](mailto:contato@do-rio.com), or follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com).
Past Editions

How Can We Improve Our City?
by barbaramarcolini | Mar 22, 2017 | 0 comments

In the coming weeks, I’m going to talk to cariocas who are looking for solutions for our city. They are people like you and me who decided to get their hands dirty and found ways out to problems they faced in their daily lives. I’m going to post some of these talks on Do Rio’s Facebook page.

How about you? Are you doing something for the city? Do you know anyone who is?

What sort of issues would you like me to talk about? I’d love to hear your opinion!

Read in the newsletter
What I am reading

Do you know what solutions journalism is? So, it’s exactly what it sounds like: journalism that looks for solutions, not only problems. This platform has a map with stories about solutions all over the world.

These cariocas from Projeto Voar give yoga classes to the homeless in the city’s parks.

Uber doesn’t go there? No problem. Residents from São Paulo’s suburbs created Ubra, an alternative to the service.

Brazilians are fascinated by European cities, but don’t replicate their solutions here. That’s what urban planner and Curitiba’s previous mayor Jaime Lerner says.
Fashion That Elevates Self-Esteem
by barbaramarcolini | Apr 5, 2017 | 0 comments

![Júlio César da Silva Lima, Jacaré Moda CEO (Photo: Ricardo Acioli)](image)

To Júlio César, creating a model agency in Jacarezinho favela was an act of resistance. And it still is. Founded 14 years ago, [Jacaré Moda](#) is a platform that solves that lack of opportunities. More than just feeding the dreams of aspiring top models, he wanted to show the residents of his community that they could become whatever they wanted to.

“Creating Jacaré Moda is telling to the rest of our society that this place exists,” he said. “We are also part of society, and this cannot be forgotten.”

The idea came out while he read fashion magazines while working as a doorman at an upper class apartment building. He saw that the girls from his community looked just
like the models on Vogue. He made contacts e started taking them to castings. He said he has lost count of how many girls became models. Two are currently in Europe. Several others became make up artists, hair stylists, fashion designers.

“I’m so proud of seeing a girl who grew up in the favela, who didn’t want to study. who didn’t believe in herself, become a model and find work,” he said. “It’s a way to make this person get rid of the favela’s stigma, overcome the lack of opportunity and reach their goals.”

In the past years the business grew, getting a new office in São Cristóvão and expanding its reach to all of Rio’s suburbs. But Jacaré continues as Júlio César’s main focus. Now, besides the model agency, they also have a school were residents can attend to professional courses in the beauty industry, such as hair dressing and hair styling.
“It’s good to have models going to Europe. But to those who stay here, what can we offer?” he asks. “We want to have more impact, help residents have a profession, generate income.”

Read on the newsletter

What I am reading

“Marlene Garcia is 59 years old, is black, worked as a housemaid. Every day, without the government’s help, she feeds 230 children in the favela.”

Bahia’s Federal University is the first in Brazil to establish quotas for trans students in its graduate degrees.

Favela Brass teaches music and English to children and teens Pereirão favela, in Laranjeiras. Check this video out, it’s beautiful.

For those who support the death penalty for criminals, Romario Regis, from Papa Goiaba agency, explains the path of a gun until it gets to a criminal’s hands.

And a little of self-promotion: why am I building a solutions-focused platform for cariocas?
A Different Tour in Rio’s Favelas
by barbaramarcolini | Apr 19, 2017 | 0 comments

Cosme Felippsen, tour guide and founder of Rolé dos Favelados (Photo: Ricardo Acioli)

As a teenager, Cosme Felippsen found out that being from the favelas didn’t mean what he thought. At least not in the city. For someone who had grown up in Morro da Providência, being from the favelas had a mere geographic meaning. But, to his colleagues at his first job as a tour guide, the word had a another meaning.

“When I left the favela I understood the stigma of being from there,” he said. “Being from a favela meant that you were a drug addict, a looser.”

To confront the stigma, Cosme created Rolé dos Favelados, a series of tours in Rio’s favelas guided by the own residents. The goal is to bring residents other areas to get to know a new territory in their own city.
“The rolé doesn’t consist of only showing the place, but also discussing it,” said Cosme. “We talk about what the favela is, what it means to the rest of the city, what public safety and criminal justice have to do with it. It’s a tour mixed with activism.”

Cosme has been doing this work for over three years with his agency *Providência Turismo*, where he gathered his certificate as tour guide with the experience of growing up in the place that named all favelas – Morro da Providência became known as “favela hill” 120 years ago, when soldiers that fought in the Canudos was camped there to demand a bonus from the army.

In the mean time, the rolés that started in Providência already had editions in Maré and Santa Marta. The next ones will take place in Alemão, Vila Autódromo and Babilônia. All places where the lack of empathy between the State and the population generate daily tragedies.

“Only who has lived their whole lives in a place really knows it” said Cosme. “The State always comes to the favela holding guns. If, instead of police officers, we had more teachers, doctors, the problem would be solved much easier.”

Cosme believes that changing this situation starts by getting to know it better.

**Read on the newsletter**

**What I am reading**

This project prepares [students from all over the country](#) to help solving their cities’ problems

[Fala Roça](#) newspaper and [Sankofa Museum](#) created a [collaborative map with cultural spaces in Rocinha](#)

“[The Homicide Epidemic has a cure](#),” wrote Robert Muggah and Ilana Szabó, [Instituto Igarapé](#)‘s directors
This Journalist Brings Movies to the West Zone
by barbaramarcolini | May 9, 2017 | 0 comments

Gisele Motta, executive-producer of Zona de Cinema film festival (Photo: Ricardo Acioli)

Every time she wanted to go to the cinema, journalist Gisele Motta had to face at least a one-hour commute. Living in Santíssimo, in the West Zone of Rio, she couldn’t find independent movies close to her home. She found her solution in a projection equipment: now, Gisele created a cinema in any of the West Zone’s park.
“If you go to the city center or to the South Zone, there are many cultural options,” she said. “In the West Zone, we only have blockbusters.”

The idea of projecting movies in public spaces won a grant from the mayor’s office for Culture, RioFilme, and became *Zona de Cinema*, an outdoor film festival in the West Zone, which will take place in July. National long movies will be screened, for free, in places like Praça Gramacho, in Bangu, Fazenda Viegas, in Senador Camará, and Viaduto de Realengo. *Cine Oeste* will select short films at a competition that will award local filmmakers with scholarships and cash prizes.

“We believe it’s important to show these local filmmakers that they can work with cinema,” said Gisele, who is producing the festival with Jefferson Placido. “There are so many good people doing cinema, why not give them the opportunity to become professionals?”

*Children watch a “film attack” in Vila Aliança, Bangu (Photo: Jaqueline Sourib)*

Before the festival, the producers are promoting “film attacks”, in which they take the projection equipment to a park or public space and screen a movie. There are also
theme sessions, followed by discussions with film makers at Espaço Cultural Viaduto de Realengo in partnership with Cine Viaduto. The last one, about environmental movies, happened in March. The next, on May 20th, will talk about violence in the city.

The efforts to agitate the cultural scene find barriers in the West Zone’s isolation, said Gisele. While in other areas of the city are witnessing a wave of new uses for public spaces, the region suffers with the lack of public transportation and very few common areas.

“Since it’s so difficult to commute even within the West Zone, we don’t have many places where people converge,” said Gisele. “When you don’t have cultural and educational centers, people get cloistered and don’t participate in the city’s movements.”

Bringing cultural events to the public spaces is an attempt to revert this.

Read in the newsletter
It all started at a birthday party, when a longtime friend struck me with the following question:
“What do you do at the newspaper?”

“I’m a reporter,” I answered, a little astonished that she didn’t know what I had been doing for the last four years in one of Brazil’s largest newspapers.

“Ok, but what exactly do you do?” she insisted.

“I write stories.”

Nevermind the uncountable links I shared on social media and the constant requests for leads. She had never read one of my stories, not on the paper, not on the web, not on the mobile app. And she wasn’t alone. I realized most of my non-journalist friends didn’t read what my colleagues and I produced. Our legacy media organization was failing to connect with them, despite our efforts to make good, trustworthy and engaging journalism.

I came to the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism with one idea in mind: creating a news startup for younger Brazilians — starting with those in Rio de Janeiro, where I built my career as a local reporter. It bothered me that our media landscape was still monopolized by a few traditional newspapers and one main broadcast channel, with very little innovation on the web.
Most of the startups in our field are based in São Paulo. The citizens of Rio, the country’s second largest city and host of the 2016 Olympic Games, were left behind in the news game. Our local coverage — including where I used to work — is mostly limited to crime, corruption and the state’s bankruptcy. I was not surprised when my friends told me that they didn’t read the news from Rio. Why? Because it’s depressing, they said. I agreed.

What can I offer to an audience who is sick of what they see on the news? This has been my challenge for the past four weeks. I’ve interviewed several people, conducted online research, and talked to friends, mentors and professors. I realized that I can’t simply give a new package to the news that is out there.

“Journalism is to help a community organize its knowledge so it can better organize itself,” says Jeff Jarvis. I wake up every morning with a new idea, draw a business model, and then tear it apart. Coming up with a news startup is not that simple.

I am sure of one thing, though. If you don’t like what you see on the news, you should change it. People from Rio are known for their resilience. Despite all the problems we face, we are proud of our city, and we never give up dreaming of a better future. My goal is to bring this resilience together, and use it to build the changes we want to see in Rio. Instead of writing stories that no one reads, I’m going to help cariocas write their own stories.
"I don’t want a problem, I want a solution" — This is Do Rio’s mantra

Do you know what solutions journalism is? It is exactly what it sounds: journalism that reports on solutions. It seems simple, but it is not. We, journalists, spend most of our time looking for problems: crime, corruption, disasters. But we rarely point out solutions for them. Take a quick read on today’s main stories. Now tell me: how do you feel?
Hopeless. This is what I heard from my target audience — residents of Rio aged between 18 and 35 years old. They told me they were sick of turning to local news and finding only stories about crime and corruption. These are important topics, but they just make you feel depressed, they said. Do you want more local news? “No,” my audience begged me.

Local media has been giving them the worst of society, showing them how unscrupulous, racist and selfish human beings can be — especially those in power. Isn’t it what journalists, the watchdogs of society, should be doing? Yes, sure. But why limit our reporting to the problems, not pushing further on the ways to solve them as well?

When reviewing my audience’s answers, one section caught my attention. I asked them what their biggest dream was. “Live in a more equal city,” one reader said. “Living in a less violent city,” noted another. “See my own growth along with positive change in our city,” wrote another one. That was the moment when I turned to solutions journalism. How else could I help my readers achieve their dreams, if not looking for change?

This is what solutions journalism is about: investigating the cause of a problem, and how individuals, governments or organizations are trying to fix it. See this example of how a city is fighting homelessness, or how Uruguay reduced the number of deaths due to unsafe abortions. Also, learn how doctors are responding to soaring drug prices and how a San Francisco clinic is helping opioid addicts.
But these stories don’t attract readers, you may argue. Actually, research has shown that people are more likely to share good news on social media and headlines that suggest a solution receive more engagement. And by the way, millennials are more attracted to news that has social impact.

I’ve recently talked to Justin Auciello, founder of Jersey Shore Hurricane News. He’s been experimenting with Listening Posts: asking readers what their questions or concerns are on a specific topic, and then investigating it. This turned out to be a great tool for finding solutions for the community’s needs, or helping bringing their input to local politicians, as they did with this Facebook Live chat with Brick Mayor John Ducey.

The method is similar to the one developed by Hearken, a tool for newsrooms listen to their audience from pitch to publication. Here, the public votes on which story they want to see published, follows the reporter’s journey investigating it, and finally sees the piece done. It doesn’t necessarily lead to a solution, but it could. Listening to your audience’s needs is the first step toward helping them find a solution for their problems.

This is what my project, Do Rio, aims to do. It will connect Rio’s residents who want to live in a better city, listen to their input, and look for solutions—individuals, organizations or government agencies who are doing, or who could be doing, something to solve their problems. I also plan to inspire action. If we can’t find a solution, why not build it ourselves?
Solutions journalism means giving citizens the information they need to find a way out. And, finally, give them back hope.

**I Need to Talk About Rio**

Barbara Marcolini
Journalist, Brazilian, Tow-Knight Fellow
Apr 25

"My dream is: to be happy" says a wall on Morro da Providência, Rio's first favela
As someone living in New York, it sounds weird when I say I'm building a platform for people in Rio. It's a bit awkward every time I try to schedule a talk with a potential partner or an interview for a story. "How do you want to talk about Rio being in New York?" I've heard this question many times. I've asked myself many more.

But wait. How could I not talk about Rio?

Last week I published a story about Cosme Felippen, a tourist guide and favela resident who created guided tours that challenge people's thoughts about the place where he lives. He told me that he had never seen the favela the way others see it until the day he left it. Then, he realized all of its meanings. And he wanted to show people who don't live in a favela what it really means.

"People start to see themselves better when they leave where they are," he told me.

Like Cosme, I started to better see Rio when I left.

I had always been in love with this city, but in a way I also wanted to escape it. The culture, the lifestyle, the music, the nature — these are easy to fall in love with. The violence, the inequality, the prejudice, the corruption, the traffic — these are much easier to despise. But the mixture of both sides brings up the best of Rio: its people. Most of all, their creativity to overcome all of this city's problems and thrive.
After the excitement of hosting the World Cup in 2014 and the 2016 Olympics, the city fell into a deep depression. The state is completely bankrupt, its previous governor Sergio Cabral is in jail, and many other politicians are involved in Operation Car Wash, the largest anticorruption investigation in the country's history. Crime has spiked, and so has unemployment.

In the middle of all this, the middle class is moving abroad (we saw a similar exodus in the 1990’s, when Brazil was also in deep economic and political crisis). But what about those who can't escape? They create. Activists, artists, musicians, video makers, writers — they are all finding ways to bring back the proud of being carioca, working to make our economy and self esteem revive after the depression.

I've decided that I want to document that with my project, Do Rio. More than just look for solutions, I want to bring light to the solutions that people are developing — not because they want, but because they desperately need it. And in this journey, I'll also write about the Rio that I am starting to see better: the one of resilient people, full of contradictions and creativity, that is proud of itself enough to shine even during dark times.

I could not write about anything but Rio. And I would never realize that if I hadn't left.
What I Learned Building My First Startup

Barbara Marcolini
Journalist, Brazilian, Tow-Knight Fellow
May 12

Me, working (Photo: Roberto Capocelli)

Four months ago, I joined the 7th cohort of the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism with an idea in mind and no clue of how to bring it to life. It was tough, a bit crazy and a lot of fun. Now it’s done. Here’s is what I learned in the journey:
1. Listen to your audience

It seems obvious, but we, journalists, rarely think about our readers’ needs. We take it for granted that we know what they need, but very often we are wrong. Think about those long form articles you never had patience to finish reading, or those interactive pieces that you saved to check out later and never did. There are tons of amazing journalistic works out there, but at the end of the day, what actually resonates to you? And, most of all, what do you think is actually worth paying for?

When I joined the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism, I wanted to create a venture based on social media that summarized the news for millennials in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Think as if The Skimm merged with AJ+, but in Portuguese. As I started talking to my potential audience and put some thought into the business model, I heard a huge NO. Firstly, millennials are not all the same. They have different interests and — guess what? — different needs. Secondly, citizens in Rio told me they were sick of the news they were getting — so I couldn’t simply repackage the news that was out there. And, most of all, how could I build a sustainable business relying only on Facebook and Snapchat?

Talking to your audience, understanding their needs and goals, and how you, as a journalist, can better serve them, is the first and main lesson I learned at the Tow-Knight. And it’s not about understanding what they would click or subscribe for, but what value your work has for them.
2. Test your ideas

When I heard I should put out an MVP (minimum viable product) within four weeks of being in the program, I freaked out. How could I launch something if I didn’t even know what my project was about? Build a crappy website or Facebook page, choose an ugly logo and a name that I wasn’t sure of, and just ask people to check it out? No way. I wanted to have a clear idea of what my startup would be, brainstorm names and logos for some time, build a pretty website and have some content on it before launching.

Forget it. The more you wait, the more time you waste. Building a project is like creating a new cake recipe (sorry for the baking metaphor). Try with a little more sugar, taste. Then put in some cinnamon, give it to your roommate. Use fewer eggs, bring it to your classmates. The more people taste it, the more feedback you have. And then you understand what works and what doesn’t; how much you are able to do and what you need help with. Fail fast and find out why you failed, so you can succeed even faster.

3. Identify your indicator

So, you have listened to your audience and launched some crappy product just to test it. Great! But hey, how do you know if it failed or succeeded? Finding your KPI (key performance indicator) is not easy. Each product has different aspects, and what means success for one may not be the same for another. Think of a birthday party: how do you know if it was a success? Some may measure by the number of people who showed up, but others prefer to think of how much fun they had. Is it the number of
beer bottles in the trash can, or how great the food was? (btw, if your last party had all the items above, please invite me to the next one!)

Understanding your KPI is key to adapting your venture in the right direction. If it’s a newsletter, check how many people are actually reading it, instead of just signing up and leaving your emails unread in their inboxes. If it’s a Facebook page, how many comments and shares you have, versus the number of likes. On a site, is it the number of page views or the time people spend on it? These examples are quite straightforward, but things can get more sophisticated. Can you consider the impact of a story your KPI, instead of how many people actually read it? Could you check how much money your readers saved because of the information you shared with them, instead of how many comments they left? Again, listening to your audience is the best way to find out if your product is a success — no matter if it’s millions of people or just a few thousand, you should bring them some value.

4. Be prepared to pivot. Again. And again.

I haven’t heard from any entrepreneur that their company became exactly what they first imagined. Actually, the more they changed, the more they realized they had to change. And that’s how you bake a better cake, right (sorry, I couldn’t escape the metaphor again)? If you are able to identify what is not going well, or what could be better, you are in constant need of pivoting. If you are in the media business, you already know that. Technologies change in a blink, and so do customers and your competition. Be prepared to change your value proposition, your goals, and your target audience— and don’t get too attached to old ideas. After all, building that crappy
website with the ugly logo and the imperfect name wasn’t that bad, right? You would have changed everything in a month or so anyways.

5. Nobody knows what the future of journalism looks like — and that’s the beauty of it

Imagine if you were born already knowing how your whole life would be. Kind of boring, right? Over the past four months, we’ve heard several stories of success, a few of failure and countless in between. No one knows what the future of journalism is, simply because no one knows how the future will turn out, period. There are some good bets, but guess what? Big bets are the ones that fail the most. And that’s why being able to listen, test, evaluate and adapt is so important. Who could tell that newsletters would be a hit and tablets would be dead five years ago? Experimenting with different revenue streams and understanding how fast the media landscape changes is key to surviving in this business. But being able to navigate with the flow, understanding the trends, and thinking out of the box is even more valuable. No one told us being journalists would be easy — and becoming entrepreneurs is just one more step in this adventure.

Ps: Remember The Skimm merged with AJ+ idea? It became a solutions journalism platform for Rio’s residents. Check out Do Rio’s website and Facebook page, sign up to my newsletter and let me know what you think! This venture is the final project for my Master’s in Entrepreneurial Journalism at CUNY J-School and the dream of a
reporter-wannabe-product-manager who wants to help residents build a better city to live.

Ps2: A big thanks to the amazing minds of Jeff Jarvis, Jeremy Caplan, Marc Pultuskier, Natalia Chaparro, Hong Qu and the EJ17 crew who guided me through this journey; to my co-founder (and boyfriend) Ricardo Acioli who patiently listened to all my fears and doubts, to my favorite boss Aydano André Motta who shared ideas and pains about journalism in the city we love, and to the friends and strangers who liked my page, subscribed to my newsletter and agreed to be my guinea pigs in this experiment. Now, let’s go back to work ;)

The problem
Rio is going through economic, political and social crisis. Local media cover these issues, but don't point out to solutions. As a result, residents feel hopeless about the future.

The solution
Do Rio is a platform where citizens find inspiring stories, exchange ideas on how to solve their city's problems and take part in events with positive impact.

The market
Rio has 6.5 million residents, 3 million with ages between 20 and 35. Our goal is to have an audience of 10,000 engaged citizens in the next 6 months.

Revenue streams
We are working with local businesses, providing branded content native advertising, besides promoting sponsored events.

Traction
Facebook: 20,000 people reached, 5,000 engagements in past 30 days;
Newsletter: 29% subscriber growth; 34% open rate in past 30 days.

The team
Barbara Marcolini: journalist, five years reporting for O Globo, Rio's largest newspaper;
Ricardo Acioli: photographer and filmmaker specialized in corporate content.
Cariocas in search of a better city
Who are cariocas?

6.5 million people

45% ages 20 - 35

43% very proud of being carioca*

*Source: Rio Como Vamos
Depressing news

Rio is going through economic, political and social crisis. Local media cover these issues, but don’t point out to solutions. As a result, residents feel hopeless about the future.

Vila Cruzeiro has a morning of intense shooting with three shot and closed schools

More than 200 thousand RJ servers have not yet received the March salary

Secretary of Finance alleges that it is the decisions of the Justice and National Treasury of arrests and blockades in the state accounts.

Students protest against the end of the free pass in the Center of Rio

Protesters urge government to withdraw from decision to stop benefit
Inspire: share stories of persons who found solutions for local issues

Discuss: readers exchange ideas about how to solve their problems

Take action: organize events where people can have positive impact
Reached 20k people

30 day traction

25% of reached users like, share or comment on our content

5k engagements
30 day traction

Newsletter focuses on engaged users, open rate is above average for media industry

29% subscriber growth

34% open rate
Revenue streams

Branded content

Native advertising

Sponsored events

Our focus on local businesses strengthens the community.
Six month goals

10k audience growth

Sell first 5 native ads

Promote first event
Barbara Marcolini
Multimedia Journalist
Five years reporting for *O Globo*, Brazil's largest newspaper

Ricardo Acioli
Photographer and filmmaker
Produced corporate materials for Brazil's largest companies
Cariocas in search of a better city

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