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Multi-territoriality, Culture and Social Networks: Hybrid spatiality and practices of Hip Hop movement in Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

We bring on the debate how hip hop movement constructs hybrid spatialities in the urban scene and how it delineates its peripheral coexistence in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This work aimed to give visibility to hip hop culture and to investigate the inclusion of virtual communities in the hybrid territories of the city. One of the action mechanisms of hip hop movement works through social networking sites and virtual social networks. Thus, from the virtual communities it is observed the construction of a multi-territoriality resulting from the overlapment of territories able to disrupt temporal and geographic boundaries. This research was conducted in the period between September 2008 and April 2010, resulting in textual and photographic reports. Our methodology was based on field research and research on social networking sites (wikis, orkut, twitter and blogs) of hip hop movement. From an exploratory and unstructured research, we identified that these virtual social networks are characterized by a feeling of belonging, common sense and intense social interaction. Virtual social networks show that cyberspace is considered an increase of social and cultural capital. Understanding this digital interface allows a better understanding of the expansion of new forms of social networks and of enlargement of social capital in our society.

Keywords: multi-territoriality, hip hop, culture, public space, identity.

Presentation

We bring to this debate how hip hop movement in Rio de Janeiro constructs symbolic spaces in which population supports their identity, expresses a feeling of belonging and creates its cultural heritage. This paper aims to give visibility to hip hop culture and to investigate the inclusion of virtual communities in the hybrid territories of the city. We emphasize that one of the action mechanisms of hip hop movement works through social networking sites and virtual social networks.

Thus, from these virtual communities it has been observed the construction of a multi-territoriality resulting from the overlapment of territories able to disrupt temporal boundaries, been defined by the "splice" at different scales and dimensions. It is worth observing that the events mentioned here, and disclosed also for social networking, find their materiality always in public spaces in the city, as one of many points in this network that delineates its peripheral coexistence in the urban scene, transforming and (re)-signifying urban spaces into gathering places.

Our theoretical and methodological construction was based on field research with several incursions between September 2008 and April 2010 that resulted in textual and photographic reports, on social networking sites of hip hop movement displayed on the pages of wikis, orkut, twitter, and blogs, besides theoretical argumentation on hybrid culture, public spaces and multi-territoriality consequently brought by Canclini (2000, 2006), Teixeira Coelho (1986, 1997), Huet (2001) and Haesbaert (2004).

Indeed, it is worthwhile to understand that access to universal culture should be combined with the appreciation of community's creative processes of groups and cultural movements, so that its experience, its knowledge and its vision of the world interpenetrate social fabric and generate a new quality of life, different from the aridity of 'modernity' incentivated by cultural homogenization.

Considerations on culture, public space and hybridity

Culture is considered a "catalyst" of urbanities and an instrument of social inclusion, therefore enhances and stimulates the feeling of belonging and cultural identity of communities. Valuing cultural movements as culturally significant territories there create opportunities for exchanges between a larger number of social actors. In this process, differences and experiences are taken into consideration, creating conditions for society to be transformed and improved. Thus, we believe that cultural movement of hip hop, in manifesting itself in the city, allows a relation of alterity and approximation with the Other. By interacting and removing symbols from culture, it re-signifies urban spaces and rescues the socialization of public life. It becomes

valid delineating on the routes and use of culture in contemporary urban policies and projects. Werthein indicates that culture is "social capital" capable of mobilizing,

'by stimulating the feeling of belonging to a collective project, participation, promotion of attitudes that promote peace and sustainable development, respect to rights, finally, the ability of human beings and communities to abide their destiny.' (WERTHEIN, 2003, p.16).

In this sense, culture appears as a privileged social space of practices, representations, symbols and rituals that young people seek to establish their identities. This potential of culture is confirmed in the placement made by Gilberto Gil, when he indicates it constitutes itself in the social space as an "constructor axis of identities, as a privileged space for the attainment of citizenship and social inclusion, as well as economic fact generator of richness" (Gil, 2003, p.9).

What is observed is the shift in the culture from a subordinate position to a strategic position in contemporary urban politics, in which we observe a growing number of cultural actions aimed at promoting local identity and social inclusion. In most cases, the public space – street – becomes the "stage" of many of these cultural manifestations. According to Faria (2003, p.40):

'the street is the kingdom of the community. We can say it is the place par excellence of community's cultural manifestations. [Thus, as the closest site to the community.]¹ Experience has shown that places culturally appropriate by population have been valorized. (...) There is now a pro-cultural movement on the streets.'

Within this construction, the street is the perfect place for the materialization of cultural actions and hip hop became an effective way of communication in the suburbs of town. We will see that this dialogue with the various localities of the city is also established through virtual social networks that spatialized hip-hop culture in Rio de Janeiro.

Hip hop is one that calls for manifestation of public life, becoming the very place favorable to the construction of affection and affirmation of identities, at the same time it creates the space for its manifestation. As quoted by Martin (2005, p.41), in public space, young people create their own spaces of urbanity that become culturally significant territories in which different identities are developed.

We believe they are the identity and cultural ties that unite individuals and root communities. Currently, disparate cultures and identities are set side by side, providing new socio-cultural blends. In most cases, cultures find new materiality and assume new aspects. For Teixeira Coelho (1997, p.125) and Canclini (2000, p.19), they become hybrid and are the result of various mixtures blends. Thus, we highlight the hip hop movement in Brazil as an example of cultural hybridization process that, according to Leal (2007, p.20), had its origin in the 70's in United States, more precisely in the suburbs of New York and Chicago; arrives in Brazil in the 80's and receives influences from various cultures.

¹ Author's note

According to Fochi hip hop culture was born from actions to contain the constant wars and disputes between gangs in the suburbs of New York, the alternative was to promote an internal organization using resources of the community itself, without relying on government political support. In his report, the author exposes the following statement:

'Beyond strategy to attract young people and contain disputes and violence between gangs, hip hop's music, dance and art function as promotion elements of culture. To make the letters, inventing new dance moves and artistic expression, it is necessary knowing the reality, knowing history, being engaged. Thus, we promote awareness and social inclusion of individuals – or at least, integration and awareness of the harsh reality in which they are.' (FOCHI, 2007, p.62).

The hybrid culture of hip hop in Brazil and its multi-territoriality

We treat the hybrid culture of hip hop through the experience lived in the space of virtual social networks, which illustrates its multi-territoriality. We understand that the hip hop movement is able to articulate a coherent territory-network from its virtual spatialization, as scores in the physical space of the city experiential places. Thus, to understand these implications, we use the concept of multi-territoriality by Haesbaert:

'The multi-territoriality is (...) resultant of the domain of a new type of territory, the territory-network in the strict sense (...). Here, the Euclidean perspective of a continuous space-surface almost succumbs to discontinuity, fragmentation and simultaneity of territories that we can not distinguish anymore clearly where they begin and where they end, or even, where they will 'hatch' because rhizomatic formations are also possible.' (HAESBAERT, 2004, p.348).

In this respect, we apply the concept of the rhizome to bring to light the notion of multi-territoriality of hip hop culture and its interaction within virtual social networks territory. What we mean is that hip hop culture has a rhizomatic character as it doesn't need a fixed meeting point and been virtually pluggable (materializing anywhere in the city). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1995, p. 22) a rhizome is "connectable in all its dimensions, removable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification".

Thus, we emphasize the multi-territoriality of a manifest culture that, in Brazil, recreates by hybridizing with local culture. This local, paraphrasing Canclini (2006, p.327):

'from which several Latin American artists write, paint or compose music, [and that] is no longer the city where they passed their childhood, nor is this where they live for a few years, but a hybrid place, where they cross the places really lived.'

Such considerations bring us face to an experienced territory appropriated by lived aspects, in which the role of time as capable of printing in place the diversity of hip hop culture is emphasized. We observed that the time acts not only within space itself but also in a virtual meeting space. For Haesbaert (2004, p.13):

'more than (...) spatial superposition, (...), it is, today, especially with the new technological-informational apparatus at our disposal, a multi-

territoriality not only by physical displacement as well as "virtual connectivity" the ability to interact at distance, influencing and, somehow, integrating other territories.'

In this regard we reschedule the identity social networking of hip hop movement that not only publicize events, but more especially, in some way try to define its origin and setting of their "nationwide " presence with specific characteristics of brazilian culture, but not relieving their founding ideology in american ghettos. Bastos (2008, p. 35) points some characteristics of hip hop movement:

'Oppression, marginalization, violence, loss of culture and leisure is a reality perceived and felt similarly by the residents in peripheries anywhere in the world. However, dialogue with local culture, with popular, with regional, causes hip hop movement to acquire singular characteristics that differentiate and legitimate it within the political, social, racial and cultural local peculiarities.'

According to Bastos (2008), the hip hop movement has emerged in Brazil in the mid 80's in the city of São Paulo and in the ABC Paulista. Its first manifestations occurred in the Ramos Square in São Paulo and in the 24 de Maio Street, also in the central region. According to Ribeiro (2009, p.4):

'This type of street dance, known generically as break, is the first manifestation of hip hop in Brazil, and begins to be performed in Ramos Square, in St. Bento Subway Station and in the 24 de Março Gallery, highlighting in this period the Funk & Cia dance teams, in which the "father" of brazilian break, Nelson Triunfo, and break dance team Jabaquara Breakers highlight.'

The hip hop movement has spread throughout Brazil and the world through these three elements: break, graffiti and rap. To Fochi, these elements "work as a mean, a tool for spreading what some authors call the fourth – and, in our view, most important – element of hip hop: knowledge" (FOCHI, 2007, p.64). A major factor in the consolidation and strengthening of street culture was having, as a support base, awareness and knowledge.

Indeed, it is important to note that hip hop is also growing as street culture and social resistance in the virtual space of social networks, always resting on that four pillars that have converted in its forms of communication. According to Yuka (2007, p.15):

'its ideological romanticism survives painfully in a much wider peripheral level in slums throughout the Third World. From the periphery of poor countries it is projected into the future, announcing its newest element: information. Hence the importance of understanding their identity and growth in diverse areas of action.'

We realize, through the historical placements of Fochi (2007), Bastos (2008), Ribeiro (2009) and Leal (2008), that movement is fraught with a potential for transforming realities, in other words, that it has the ability to transform its culture which finds great reception in Brazil and which is partly due to the fact that hip hop culture represent a symbolic place of identity construction, so a space adequate for construction and reaffirmation of social periphery identity.

We believe that hip-hop as culture is able to express their multi-territoriality because it is easily hybridizing with local culture; but it also highlights, in urban areas, hybrid territories. According to Haesbaert (2004, p.344)

'The existence of what we are calling multi-territoriality, at least in the sense of experiencing several territories at once and, thereafter, formulating a effectively multiple territorialization, is not exactly a novelty, for the simple fact that if the process of territorialization starts from individual level or small groups, all social relations implie a territorial interaction, an interaction of different territories. In some sense, we would have always lived a "multi-territoriality.'

Hip hop and its social networking: peripheral and urban coexistence

The hip hop movement delineates its coexistence through virtual communities that embrace multiple territories in Rio de Janeiro. We emphasize that, virtual social communities establish social ties and build a mutual interaction between individuals that, according to Primo, "gather together from a common sense, and not by mere geographic aggregation" (PRIMO, 1997, p.2).

For Rheingold (1993) "virtual communities are places where people meet, (...) Point of view, along with identity, is one of the great variables in cyberspace". To Fernback and Thompson (1995), virtual communities consist of 'social relations formed in cyberspace through repeated contact in a limit or specific location (like an electronic conference) symbolically delineated by topic or interest' (FERNBACK; THOMPSON, 1995, cited in PRIMO, 1997, p.8).

Indeed, we identify that the hip hop movement has great performance and achieves high visibility through social networking sites and virtual communities such as orkut, blogs, sites, twitter, facebook, myspace and others. This observation is the focus of our analysis, where we seek to understand the actions of those in cyberspace and the overlap in the city.

For Silva and Gonzaga (2009, p.6) the development of communication technologies in space permitted the closeness of cultures making their coexistence more palpable. We used here the concept of spaces of coexistence that, according to Augras, "in the space of coexistence, men weave networks that approach and depart them, organizing the world so as to secure reciprocal movementation areas" (AUGRAS, 1981, cited in LOPES, 2009, p.23). In this sense, we view the territory as something dynamic, though their constant movement, rhythm, flow and network and that, according to Haesbaert (2007, p. 281), is endowed with meaning and expressiveness.

Thus, from an exploratory and unstructured research, we found that these virtual social networks are characterized by a feeling of belonging, common sense and strong social interaction. These virtual communities are formalized through an ideological and political

discourse, with a strong social commitment and community action. For example, in the blog "Visão da Favela"² are posted messages of protest and position in relation to society:

'There is a big difference in living with the money and live for the money. I know many people who devoted a large part of their lives to rap, and these continue to be a reference because we believe that rap is above all a bias to disclose our social problems and our oppressors. The philosophy of our collective will keep believing and working towards the development and clarification of our role in this society of classes, racist, opportunist, toady and friendly to the rich.' (FIELL, 2007).

The idea of strong ideological character is also broadcasted by DJ Marquinho's site "Marquinho DJ Black Music"³,

'Blacks are still the minority when it comes to the executive world. Why? In general, the lack of a quality education, from elementary school through university. But there are progress and affirmative actions quite collaborate to the formation of a black elite.' (MARQUINHOS, 2009)

'In the west of the city, in Padre Miguel, in a community called "Ponto Chic", appeared about ten years a group of "cultural resistance" called "Point Chic Charm". It took just one speaker, an exquisite repertoire of black music to the heights to bring together the nostalgic that passed by and stood to remember the good times of the reign of James Brown and his disciples. Not long after it became a major meeting point for the niggers on Sunday, where who liked to listen and dance to good music could come, bring family and friends. It was an initiative of the black brothers Angelo and Eduardo Oliveira that then asked dj's Jorge Sucesso, Beto Barra and Jhony to head the ball. The movement grew (...).' (MARQUINHOS, 2009)

In this regard, we highlight the performance of virtual social networks of hip-hop as a resistance territory which creates opportunities for coexistence in the city. It may be said that the ideological character of this movement is materialized through protest (Figure 1) and claims the presence of urban periphery as active social actor, not subject to the culture of others, but active in the formation of society.

² <http://visaodafavelabr.blogspot.com>

³ <http://marquinhodjblackmusic.blogspot.com>

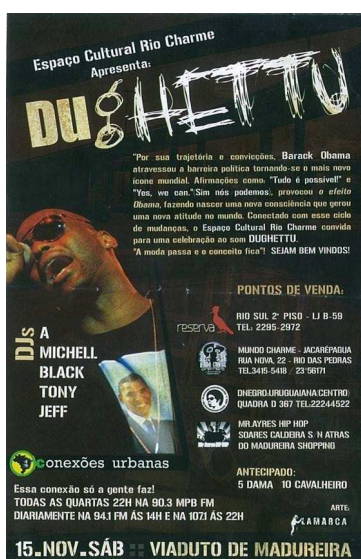
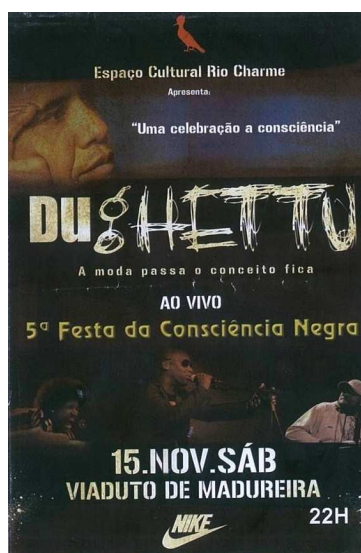


Figure 01: Flyer for divulgation of the "5th Festival of Black Consciousness" held under the Madureira Viaduct in 2008 that confirmed the nature of black culture claiming and assertion of hip hop movement, and this time took as slogan the phrase uttered by Barack Obama "Yes we can." Source: Particular archives of authors - October 2008.

In other social networking sites like *orkut* we identified a greater interaction of participants (also classified as members) from the topics in communities, event announcements, music, videos. The virtual community called GBCR⁴, originating in the Rocinha slum, sees hip hop as a tool for transforming lives of young people and proposes cultural projects linked to the cultural movement in the community.

From these considerations, we found that most virtual communities work, first of all, as a communication vehicle for divulgation of events, meetings, parties, training courses, workshops among others, and act as multipliers of points of social networks. Blogs are

⁴ <http://gbcrr2.blogspot.com/>

connected by links where one has access to the network of another, as if it were a "big square" – a territory for dissemination and placement of ideas.

The blog *Visão da Favela*, which is clearly one of these points of the virtual network, which has the "figure" of MC Fiell one of its most active backers, is part of these multi-territory of the experiences lived in cyberspace. In his blog he divulgates messages with political character (Figure 2) and creates an territory of struggle and resistance:

'Through this space I hope to meet more subversives that attempt intensely to change something in their lives and in those of their fellow... We know that peace and freedom is a great utopia in our country. But we can not sit idly waiting for something from the authorities ... We must do our part to demand our rights, not easily accepting everything that is proposed to us... If we unite and organize ourselves everything can be possible, while it doesn't happen this only encourages the opposition. Become all knowing that, 'THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED'. ' (FIELL, 2007)

We detach in the blog *Visão da Favela* the divulgation of disclosure of "Popular Booklet of Santa Marta: police approach" (Figure 2) which aims to inform the residents on the procedures of police approach and to orient the community about their rights and posture,

'On Wednesday 24/03/2010 4:30 pm we went to the hill of Santa Marta to distribute the booklet. The popular booklet of Santa Marta on police approach was borned from the needs of community residents to curb excesses and abuses of police action, by asserting their rights. His intention is to strengthen the awareness that the slum dweller should be respected by the government and its agents. The booklet describes the limits of police action and advises residents on how is the best way to act in an approach and in cases of violations of their rights. Come on now get his booklet.' (FIELL, 2007).

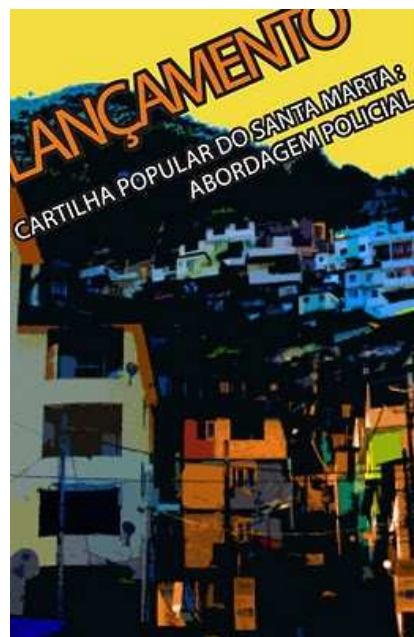


Figure 2: Divulgation of the "Popular Booklet of Santa Marta: police approach". Source: Particular archives of authors - March 2010.

We observed no further than the experience of multi-territoriality, that according to Haesbaert (2004) includes the reterritorialization via cyberspace through the multiple "ideas" surrounding the symbolism of hip hop. What drives the meeting lies in the identity, much more than in the physical place. The physical space perceived through the multi-territoriality lens of hip hop movement is sprayed in the city space.

The process of visibility of the hip hop movement through the virtual network is spatialized in real space, what we see is the spraying of hip hop in various neighborhoods and municipalities in the metropolitan area (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Map of neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro where there are parties and events related to hip hop movement. Image source: Google Earth Image (Accessed: April 19, 2010). Data Source: Web sites mentioned in the article.

In figure 4, from virtual networks, were identified events, festivals, workshops and courses that involve the hip hop movement in Rio de Janeiro. This shows the of movement's coverage that runs through the urban space reaching a diverse range of places that meet on social networking sites when its members deposit there their experiences and impressions of events.



Figure 4: Map of hip hop events in Rio de Janeiro according to event producers. Image source: Google Earth Image (Accessed: April 19, 2010). Data Source: Web sites mentioned in the article.

Final Thoughts

We aimed to give visibility to the Hip Hop movement through their social networking sites and their insertion in multiple areas of the city of Rio de Janeiro. By constructing hybrid spatiality, Hip Hop culture coexists in the peripheral urban space and creates new scenarios that go through the real space and overlaps with the virtual.

Virtual communities, blogs, wikis, orkut and twitter prove that cyberspace is considered an increase in social and cultural capital. Understanding this digital interface allows a better understanding of the expansion of new forms of social networks and enlargement of social capital in our society. Thus, hip hop can be considered as a force that promotes and induces, it is the culture itself in action that goes beyond barriers not only physical but also social and cultural.

We attempt to demonstrate how hip hop culture can restore a sense of place as it is affectively experienced and it is able to reaffirm the "liberating nature of the ghettos". Thus, we see the hip hop movement as a resistance territory because it gives visibility to those who live on the peripheries of Rio de Janeiro, but also provides support to individuals in producing their own networks (social and virtual), in a sense that points to the construction of multiple territories that appropriate and reframe, daily, city's public spaces.

In this sense, we observe how virtual social networks fit effectively in divulgation and diffusion of the ideology of the hip hop movement in Brazil, and its reaffirmation in the city by spatializing its history. We remember that, for those who are followers of its system of ideas,

this may be one of "last exits" founded possibility as multiplier of the ideology of peace, tolerance and expression of the other-peripheral as a cultural creator.

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