

FLUXOS, QUEBRADA AND FUNK MUSICKING FEELING WITHIN THE MUSIC

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DOSSIER LOCAL MUSICKING

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ABSTRACT

The article presents data from an ethnography carried out between 2017 and 2019, in a peripheral neighborhood on the south side of São Paulo, where street funk parties known as *fluxos* (Portuguese word that can be translated as flows or fluxes) take place. I propose an analysis of *fluxos* based on the concept-verb of *musicking* of the New Zealander Cristopher Small (1998). From this perspective it is essential to understand all the agents engaged in the production of the party, even those who apparently are not producing music, and even those considered non-human. What other elements are behind a musical manifestation in the streets of a *quebrada* (local slang meaning slum or ghetto), besides the sound elements themselves? In the case of *fluxos*, we will see the centrality of funk sound systems in this music and what kind of sensations and reactions they cause. The funk *fluxos* emerge as a specific *musicking* that demarcates a type of soundscape in the peripheral regions of the city. Funk and the party act in the sentimental and symbolic construction of these localities and in the production of shared identities.

KEYWORDS:
fluxo; funk;
quebrada;
musicking; sound
system.

I arrived at the *quebrada*¹ around six-thirty in the afternoon. I went straight to find my local host, Bonito², to leave my things at his home. We then went to the Association where he works and we talked with residents on the street ahead. Today is Saturday, the streets are full, social life is teeming outside the houses, in front of the bars with their billiard tables and their sound systems playing funk and electronic *forró*³, in front of the gates with *naves*⁴ parked with their doors open and *pumping* a repertoire of funk *putaria* and funk *proibidão*⁵. From seven o'clock in the evening, the countless churches also begin to fill and populate the soundscape of the *quebrada* with their hymns of praise sung by the regulars, microphoned and equipped. There was me, Bonito, his boss at the Association known as Fogão, and a young student using the Association's cultural programs, Rafael. We talk about politics, Brazil, Trump. Fogão likes Trump. Rafael said that he didn't think it was right for a man to kiss another man, and we entered a debate about homophobia and told him that we should accept and respect the wishes of others. Rafael is evangelic, and continuing the conversation based on a question from me about funk in the neighborhood, he said that there are only mess, drugs and the police in *fluxos*. He is 21 years old and the majority of visitors to the *fluxos* are in his age group. His opinions express a *favela* interface connected with evangelical values and practices, and with a certain conservatism regarding acceptable behaviors. A few meters from where we were, an evangelical church was beginning to fill up for the seven-thirty evening service. The church occupies the ground floor of a townhouse. A small room with plastic chairs for the faithful, with their backs to the street. A small altar at the bottom, in a position where the pastor who leads the cult can observe who passes outside.

1 Throughout the text, I chose to italicize slang and expressions used by the research interlocutors that are important for the analysis (*quebrada*, *hitting loudly*, *pumping*, *ships*, etc.). All words of Portuguese origin were written in italics. The concept verb of *musicking* is also written in italics. Other quotes always appear in parentheses.

2 All the names of people and places featured in this article are fictional. I chose not to reveal the name of the *quebrada*, but it is located in a neighborhood in the South Zone of the city of São Paulo. These choices were made together with my interlocutor and host, Bonito, to preserve privacy and ensure the safety of the people involved.

3 *Forró* is a traditional Brazilian music genre.

4 *Naves* is the way the younger residents of the neighborhood call the transformed cars (lowered and / or with a powerful sound system at the trunk) that inhabit street *fluxos*. *Nave* is the Portuguese word for spaceship. These transformed cars look like spaceships.

5 *Putaria* and *proibidão* are different styles of Brazilian funk music. *Putaria* could be translated as whoring, *Proibidão* means something like highly prohibited.

We returned to Bonito's house after picking up his girlfriend Lia, and we rested from eleven at night until one in the morning when we left for the *fluxos*. The first *fluxo* we found was in front of the "High Tech bar". A sound wall (*paredão de som*) and several car sounds were already working, with groups of young people on the street drinking and dancing around the equipment. The predominant funk styles are *putaria* and *proibidão*. I heard little ostentatious funk and no conscious funk (other funk styles in Brazil). Another nearby *fluxo* that was already happening was that of Mariana Street, in front of "Naná bar", with two speakers playing. Between the two *fluxos* there are many sound sources, mostly cars and loudspeakers in bars. The police at one point wet⁶ the "High Tech" sound wall. The sound system on Mariana Street continued to operate late into the night. A scene that caught my attention at the beginning of the night was a very small child dancing and singing a funky *putaria* that played nearby. She was already trying to sing the choruses, not knowing exactly what they were saying. I also noticed the white Corsa (car model) standing in front of the "Site dos Brothers bar", which is always with the same group listening to electronic *fórró* very close to my room. On Mariana street, we stayed in front of "Naná bar" until four in the morning. The party was still full, the flow of pedestrians, motorbikes and cars quite intense. The girls in general dance more than the men, making the intense hip movements characteristic of the funk body choreography. But the main activity was drinking, snorting and smoking. For a while now, I started to observe a lot of hookahs, flashy objects made especially for the consumption of tobacco with essences, but that can also be used for marijuana. Some bars in the neighborhood have become tobacconists, where young people can smoke hookahs and buy tobacco and essences. Once in a while, young people sang the funks that played in the sound systems of bars and tobacconists.

Many motorcycles. Motorcycles of expensive models, with higher displacement, those racing models sung in funk lyrics like the Yamaha R1 or Kawasaki. Young people walk without a helmet and accelerating a lot, more because of noise than speed. In fact, sometimes they are stopped in the middle of the crowded *fluxo* and give that violent acceleration that almost pops our ears. I think that loud sound is a value. Always the sound. The exhaust pipes of the motorbikes sing along with the loudspeakers of the various types of sound system,

⁶ "Wetting" is a local term for when the police interrupt the funk dance or the street flow.

forming a polyphonic sound landscape in the early morning hours of the *quebrada*. (Field Notes – January 13, 2018).

STREET *FLUXO* LIKE A FUNKY *MUSICKING*

Talking about funk *musicking* is not the same as talking about funk music. Funk music can be thought of as a recording done in the studio by a DJ and an MC. It is the sound product of this relationship. It can be performed electronically on a sound system on the street, on a computer at home, on a headset, in a car, on the loudspeakers inside a nightclub. It can also be performed live on stage, at a show, at a funk circle, at a meeting of MCs and DJs⁷. According to Carlos Palombini (2014), funk carioca is characterized by a beat of Afro-Brazilian matrix, by a singer who deals with this rhythmic basis.

The origin of funk carioca deserves a separate text, but many authors (Vianna 1988), (Essinger 2005) and (Novaes 2020) agree that the black dances in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro in the 1970s were an important historical landmark. In 1989, the album “Funk Brasil” by DJ Malboro was released, with electronic beat tracks and verses sung in Portuguese. The “*melô*” (Portuguese versions of great foreign hits of the time) sung at the parties begin to enter Brazilian studios. Carlos Palombini considers the recording “Macumba Lelê” – by DJs Alessandro and Cabide, in the fourth volume of the series “Beats, Funks and Raps”, by DJs Grandmaster Raphael and Amazing Clay, in 1994 – important to mark a kind of turning point in the musical aesthetic of the genre, because it would bring for the first time percussive touches of Afro-Brazilian music mixed with electronic music⁸. Since then, some “styles” or “strands” have been developed – such as *proibidão*, ostentation (*ostentação*), *putaria*, conscious (*consciente*) – where one of the elements of differentiation are the themes of the lyrics, maintaining the same standard rhythmic key as central core of the beats. “*Estilo*” (style) and “*vertente*” (strand) were the words used by my interlocutors to differentiate the types of funk based on the lyrics theme. Palombini and Novaes (2019) use the term “subgenre” to refer to these stylistic variations and add other possible types that are not restricted to the thematic variations of the lyrics – montage, melody, gospel, neurotic and comedy. In my field, I heard a lot the expression “*mandelão*” or “funk *mandela*” that dealt with sound and performance aspects of a certain type. *Mandelão* funk would be a “more *favela*” funk, characterized by shorter

7 In the artistic and phonographic universe of São Paulo funk that I observed, my interlocutors MCs (Masters of Ceremony) showed themselves as the singers and composers, while DJs (Disc Jockeys) put themselves as those who produce the musical bases for MCs. DJs most often assumed the role of music producers (Del Picchia 2013) for MCs. Some of them did not even perform at the dances anymore, restricting their performance to recording studios (both their own individual studios and those of larger producers).

8 <http://www.proibidao.org>

lyrics, by a most spoken chant. Producers DJs I met said, for example, that in funk *mandelão* they could not tune the voices⁹ of MCs within the production software, as they would in other styles. An interesting point that Palombini and Novaes raise is that depending on the way the music is performed or produced, it can change its subgenre.

Funk carioca music is a sung speech or a song spoken on a rhythmic basis. This speech is that of the poorest layers of the sub-urbanized areas of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Its melody derives both from the inflections of the speech itself and from the local sound space, cut and pasted. This procedure does not apply only to the melody, but it constitutes the very technology of an intelligence that finds expression in the musical genre (Caceres, Ferrari, Palombini 2014, 177-178)

I consider this a good description to think about the funk that today plays on the outskirts of São Paulo. A scene that I observed many times on the field – in spaces such as the Funk League of São Paulo, studios and meetings with MCs in their neighborhoods – was the singing with the clap of the hand in the characteristic rhythmic key. Many MCs claimed that they started to “rhyme in funk” in that way, just voice and palm, in games with friends and in rhyme battles (common practice in peripheral neighborhoods). It is a creative nucleus of learning and experimenting the practice of rhyming by hitting the palm of the hand. A practice that depends solely on body technology – voice and hand. It is an aspect of making funk music before the moment when MCs enter the studio to record their compositions.

In anthropology we learn to consider that music is not just a sound object, a thing; it is an activity, an action, a process of production and social organization (Blacking 2007) and (Seeger 2008). This perspective is explored in the reflections of the New Zealander Christopher Small – educator, musicologist and ethnomusicologist – who in 1998 proposed the verb / concept *musicking*.

“To *musicking* is to participate, with any capacity, in a musical performance, performing, listening, rehearsing or practicing, providing material for the performance (what is called composing), or dancing.” (Small 1998, 9).

Looking at a *fluxo* of funk as *musicking* implies looking at all kinds of activities and social relationships that produce this musical performance and all kinds of people engaged in these activities. In the title of this topic, I wrote “a funk *musicking*” because surely there are several types of *musickings* within the funk universe. A live show in a nightclub is completely different from a street *fluxo* in the favela, even though funk

9 One of the contemporary digital music production tools allows you to tune human voices. There are two main types used, the auto-tune and the melodyne. Its use has become quite common in current funk productions.

music is playing in their repertoire. The music may be the same, but the *musicking* is not the same. Thinking socially about funk performances in São Paulo also sheds light on the potentials of thinking about the relationship between music and social life from the idea of *musicking*. It is this terrain that we will cover throughout the article.

In a street *fluxo*, the agglomeration begins spontaneously around sound systems operating at high volume levels. These sound systems can be on the trunk of cars that circulate or park on the streets of the neighborhood, they can be inside bars and tobacconists, or they can also compose what is usually called sound walls. This set of technical possibilities of sound amplification forms the initial triggers of the street *fluxo*. Without electrical activation of these sound systems, there is no party. It is worth mentioning that these are customized sound systems, that is, built to order so that they emit the sound mass with the maximum intensity possible without distortion and without loss of quality. In the neighborhood where I lived, I met two builders of sound walls that were highly requested. They produced on demand and also had their own sound walls that they rented, especially for bar owners on weekends. There is a local technical knowledge of sound system production. To get a sense of how they are valued in the São Paulo's *quebradas*, the walls have their own name, are adorned with sparkling paintings and lights, are famous on youtube, and some have even become game characters such as the "Megatron"¹⁰ wall.

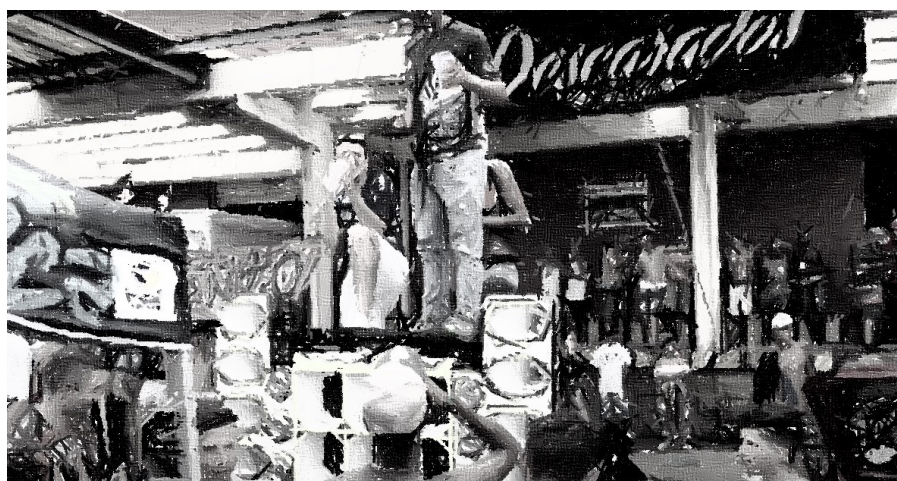


Photo 1: Young people around and above, relating to a sound wall at a *fluxo* in the South Zone, March 4, 2018. I opted to use a filter to preserve people's identity.

¹⁰ There are countless videos of Megatron on youtube, brought two examples, one from the real Megatron and the other from the Megatron game character on youtuber Johnny Gamer channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMbK-87-430>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCpc5SVRIA0>

Alexandre Barbosa Pereira, in “A Maior Zoeira” (2010), presents an account of funk parties, organized by young people in the districts where he researched, which are very similar to what I observed.

In addition, some streets in these two districts turn, mainly on weekends, into funky party spaces. In these, usually, a group of friends parks a car with a powerful sound system, opens the trunk and begins to playing funk music at a very high volume with the latest hits extolling criminal factions, the use of drugs and addressing sexual themes, these events are also referred to as *pancadões*, alluding to the rhythm of the strong electronic beats of this musical genre. Elisa Maria, in Brasília, in addition to the loud sounds and dances of the girls, there was also the juggling of motorcycles and the consumption of pure alcohol or mixed with soda and marijuana cigarettes. (Pereira 2010, 59).

We see in Pereira, one of the terms by which these street parties were called: “*pancadões*”. However, from the decade of 2010 the word “*fluxo*” came to be widely used to name these meetings¹¹, especially in the São Paulo context. The word *fluxo* is linked to some important geographical and spatial characteristics, such as the possibility of people, motorbikes and cars circulating through the party. It is a party in flux, in movement. Usually, it happens in flat places, different from what happens, for example, in the hills of Rio de Janeiro, where many parties take place in a ball format (within a fixed and circumscribed area such as a court, a shed, a nightclub, etc.)¹². In part, the configuration *fluxo* is in response to the repressive action of the military police in these locations – a party in flux is also a party that is easy to disperse, a party that can change places quickly. This does not prevent some *fluxos* from growing so much that they become fixed events of a place, such as the famous Baile da Dz7 in Paraisópolis¹³, considered the largest in São Paulo, a *fluxo* that has been

11 The first time I heard the term *fluxo* to designate these funk parties was talking to a musician friend named Kiko Dinucci, born in Guarulhos, in 2013. The oldest text I found talking about these *fluxos* is from December 2014, a story from journalist Jacqueline Elise for the Vice Brasil website, available at: https://www.vice.com/pt_br/article/8q4v7g/no-fluxo-dos-bailes-funk-de-rua-em-sao-paulo

12 For a rich description of a funk carioca party, it is worth reading the thesis of Dennis Novaes (2020). He presents a detailed ethnography of the cage ball, to name a example, on a night when DJ Rennan da Penha’s birthday was celebrated. At dances, one of the differences is the presence of stages where DJs and MCs can perform. In the *fluxos*, the sound systems are scattered on the streets and there are no stages. This is an important detail of the party’s sound organization.

13 Even though I did not play field in Paraisópolis, I cannot fail to register here the tragic action of the military police at the Dz7 party, in December 2019, which resulted in the death of nine innocent young people, aged between 14 and 23 years. The episode was widely publicized in the media and on social networks with violent images filmed by residents with their cell phones. In one of these images, a police officer attacks a young man on a crutch. An important author to better understand the meanings of the criminalization of funk is Adriana Facina (2010, 2013 and 2014) who in several texts analyzes processes of attack and repression of peripheral cultural expressions in Rio de Janeiro. The criminalization of funk emerges as one of the faces of the criminalization of poverty in Brazil.

happening for years on the same streets, bringing together thousands of young people every weekend.

In the field report that opens this article, other striking characteristics of a *fluxo* can be noted. The centrality of sound systems is constant. Without their presence, the street party does not happen. And those who use this equipment are the young visitors with their *spaceships* (cars with powerful customized sound systems that look like turbines) and the owners of local bars that use sound as an attraction for the clientele. On the side of the regulars, I often heard the report that the loud sound is to attract attention, or to make the party happen – to produce the party. On the merchants' side, I heard the narrative that sound drives sales. In some cases, they set up their own sound walls, in others, they rent the walls on weekends. The fact is that the sound power of sound systems is directly linked to the crowd of people on the street at leisure. The research took place in a neighborhood in the south of São Paulo famous for its *fluxos*. The report also records a little of the effervescence of the streets in the *quebrada* on a normal weekend. The bohemian life of the elderly listening to *forró* and playing billiards. Intense religious life within countless evangelical churches. And funk as the central cultural expression of the young peripheral. It is common to find biographies that circulate in more than one of these spaces of sociability (Simmel 2006), as is the case the case of young Rafael who attended *fluxos*, but stopped when he started attending church.

I am 21 years old, I used to go to funk. At first, I thought it was a fun thing, that it was a leisure, that it was just going out with friends to have fun and everything ... but that was not it. When you go to a club, the party has to be closed so as not to disturb the residents ... funk *fluxo* is done on the street, people come with a car, with a sound wall, put it in front of the resident's house who will work all week and on the weekend either. And a funk party is now a place to use drugs, drink, get high, there is death ... the police come the first time to talk, ask to go down, the second time it works, the third time it comes to hit the bomb, play shooting, until you beat the people who stay at the party. (Rafael, student, resident of the South Zone, commenting on the funk *fluxos* in his neighborhood).

Local perceptions about *fluxos* are in constant dispute and depend very much on which slum interfaces are at stake. The religious interface that Rafael somehow represents in this speech is against street parties. It is worth saying that the presence of evangelicals has grown a lot on the outskirts of the country's major cities¹⁴. Several factors are attributed to

¹⁴ "In the country, the Census shows that 26.2 million people declared themselves evangelical, in 2000, which represented 15.4% of the population. In 2010 that number jumped to 42.3 million people, a percentage corresponding to 22, 2% of Brazilians. " (Queiroz 2019, 14).

this growth – the less rigid hierarchy than among Catholics that makes the opening of a new church quick, the social projects they promote in needy areas, the prosperity theology that propagates the notion of entrepreneurship and values the economic rise of the faithful are some important elements (Almeida 2017), (Teixeira 2018) and (Machado 2020). One of my neighbors in the *quebrada* was a bar called Porto, where small *fluxos* occurred when the owner, young Clenilson, put a sound wall on the door. In the last stage of the camp, in 2019, the Hangar had closed and an evangelical church started to occupy the space.

The young evangelical shows that parties disturb the sleep of workers who want to rest. However, most young people find the possibility of having fun and leisure within reach in terms of income. Because it is open, it is affordable music. In addition, the parties still present themselves as a possibility of work for residents to become traders of drinks and food making the income circulate within the community. A complex dimension of the dispute for narratives around the *fluxo* is just that, just as it bothers a certain type of worker, he (the *fluxo*) produces “other workers”. Funk produces many types of workers.



Photo 2: Sound wall with a total of 40 speakers (between treble, mid and bass) parked in front of a bar in the South Zone of São Paulo, March 23, 2017.

SOUND QUEBRADA

Dude, people in the community are used to working from Monday to Friday non-stop. And then it comes Friday, Saturday and even Sunday, sometimes people want to take leisure, right! Listening to a big sound, listening to loud music, the sound wall, it is good as hell too. You can see that the favela is always playing music, dude. Always !! Any alley you pass, any street, any corner will be playing loud music. The favela never sleeps, right! We love listening to loud music yes, to feel the walls of the house shaking, to feel inside the music, you know, to feel the adrenaline of the music, we really like listening to loud music. That's why it's so important for me to put may sound loud. (Marciano, 22 years old, resident of the South Zone, owner of automotive sound that frequents *fluxos*).

The funk *fluxo* is where the kids get together, have fun, put on a sound, spend some time with friends. Some go to get a girlfriend (laughs). Some just go to drink, to relax their heads after the week The *fluxo* is the place where the periphery has fun, although some moments are repressed. The funk *fluxo* is everything for some people, especially for those who live on funk, right! It's the *quebrada's* entertainment. They took everything we had, what was left was the street dance, where it can go from those who have no money to the richest in the favela. (MC Reboque, 25 years old, resident of the South Zone, frequenter of *fluxos*).

The *fluxo* is where you will have people listening to music so you can be distracted and have fun. It is where you will find the *quebrada's* leisure, the distraction, where other people come to the *quebrada* to participate. You will find people listening to music, drinking, smoking one, taking a break, playing a little. Listening to a loud sound. You see the girls who want to dance, the boys who want to drink, the girls who want to drink. My neighbor has a sound wall inside the house, has a mini-wall. The thing is to put a sound, listening and drinking, dancing. It is a natural thing in society to have a party, to have music, to dance, to drink, to have fun. When someone wants to have a sound is to be able to produce the party. I think that these people who want to have the huge sound system, the sound wall, the neo sound systems, want to be the producers of the party. They want to have the party, provide the party, and I think it is a natural thing of society. (MC Ciça, 21, resident of the South Zone, rapper who frequents *fluxos*).

These lines reveal how important and present music is in the *quebrada*. And it has to be loud music, which makes you “feel the walls of the house shaking” and “feel inside the music”. I repeat this refrain by Marciano: feeling inside the music. To feel inside the music, the sound power is fundamental, what goes according to what Lloyd Bradley tells about the culture of the Sound Systems of reggae in Jamaica in his “Bass Culture” (2014).

It was always a phenomenon of humble neighborhoods, among certain types of people. Since the equipment was so powerful and the vibration so strong, *more than listening to the music we felt it*. It was as if dancing you became part of the music. It was *ours* and many of us wanted to do something to contribute. (Bradley quoting Jamaican music entrepreneur Derrick Harriot, 2014: 33, italics in the original)

“In Jamaica they don’t listen to music; they feel it!” also states Tomáz Gonzales Cobos, right in the preface to Bradley’s book. This sentence has a strong connection with what Marciano says about the loud funk sound. The young car owner’s perception is also connected to the musicality created within the studios by DJs and MCs in the appreciation of the sensations that the power of the bass causes. And both funk and reggae value low frequencies. We cannot talk about sound systems in funk without considering this connection with the sound system history in Jamaica. A party culture around powerful sound systems that started on the small Caribbean island more than sixty years ago. Of course, there are numerous differences between contexts, but it is important to launch this more general picture into the universe of sound systems and recognize this Jamaican origin¹⁵. It is worth noting another important common point between the two contexts, in addition to the presence of speaker walls; the origin in the ghettos. Reggae also appears in the poor ghettos of Kingston, and also comes from a unique musical mix, the result of another sonorous intersection of the black Atlantic diaspora¹⁶.

The street, the sound system, the beer at the bar, the friends gathered to get high, all this characterize the moments of enjoying leisure, partying, relaxing, and also strengthening social bonds. They form a type of sociability where the street and music are central; a sound sociability in the

15 In Brazil, it is worth remembering that there are sound system parties in the North (Costa 2009) that play mainly *tecnobrega* (another Brazilian musical genre), and there is a strong presence of electronic *fornó* sound walls throughout the Northeast. The peripheral musical genres of these regions of the country have in recent years been mixing and giving rise to new and hybrid styles such as *bregafunk*.

16 For a potent discussion on how the African diaspora across the Atlantic unfolded musically, it is worth reading Paul Gilroy’s “The Black Atlantic” (2001), especially the third chapter “Jewels brought from servitude - black music and politics of authenticity”. Adriana Facina and Adriana Lopes (2010) remember that funk carioca is a Brazilian representative of this diaspora of black culture across the Atlantic. A representative who has been continuously harassed and criminalized.

public space. It is like a weekly ritual where all the tensions and pressures that the everyday produces are decompressed and released. In this weekly ritual, the intensity of the sound is important and the sound systems are extremely valued. The owner of the sound is the one who provides the party, which according to MC Ciça is a “natural thing of society”. It is not my aim here to discuss the importance of the “party” in social life, but one of the first authors to address this was Durkheim ([1912] 2003) reminding us of the aspects of the party that make ordinary social life temporarily suspended – as well as in major religious cults and celebrations. Religious rites and festivals share delirium, effervescence, music, songs and dances that together strengthen social bonds and unite individuals¹⁷. Looking at it from this perspective, the perception seems to be coherent since on weekends people were either at street parties, or inside churches, musically celebrating their beliefs. The young Rafael seems to have exchanged a type of festive “effervescence” for the evangelical “effervescence”¹⁸.

MC Reboque brings up a recurring question that the *fluxo* is also a reflection of the lack of options for fun and leisure in the peripheral neighborhoods. It is a response to the lack of public policies in the area of culture, especially policies aimed at peripheral youth. It is also a fun alternative for low-income youth who cannot afford admission to a music show, or to a nightclub. However, the loud sound presents itself as a very controversial point as many residents feel uncomfortable. The soundscape (Schaefer 2001) produced by the *fluxos* is deafening for those who live near from the streets where the party takes place. As Marciano himself said, even the walls of the houses shake near a powerful sound system. Music invades houses and bodies. Everyone feels inside the music, whether they like it or not.

Fluxo's musicking that we are exploring here demarcates the São Paulo peripheries sonically and creates this particular soundscape formed by a polyphony of sound systems playing at the same time. We are talking about a demarcation of space and temporalities. A space that is not only geographic and physical, but abstract, sentimental and emotional. Paulo Malvasi (2012 and 2013) describes *quebrada* as a central native category in the lives of young people living in the periphery, a category of a “dialect of crazy life” (in Portuguese, *dialeto da vida loka*) that has symbolic, existential and territorial dimensions. Pereira (2010) shows how this notion of “*quebrada*” has two sides for its interlocutors: a more problematic side

17 In Brazilian anthropology, one of the most famous authors to theorize about the party was Roberto DaMatta (1997) for whom Carnival is a temporary suspension of ordinary social roles, a moment of rupture of the normal order where there would be a momentary equality of social positions.

18 The reverse way can also happen. I met an MC who lives in the same neighborhood as Rafael, who attended church when he was younger. In his late teens, he began to love rap and funk and began to value these genres as the true cultural expressions of peripheral youth. Today, he does not attend church and works with music and theater.


related to the needs that these regions experience in terms of service offerings and possibilities of exercising a dignified citizenship; a side positified by the residents as the location of the forts, the fighters, the brothers and sisters that resist the injustices of the *system*¹⁹. Facina and Lopes (2010) show how funk as a cultural expression builds other “symbolic maps” in the city of Rio de Janeiro, redefining the notion of *favela* in a more political and socially critical sense of the structural inequalities of the urban environment and racism.

Both *quebrada*, *favela* and periphery are categories loaded with multiple meanings. Thus, it makes sense to remember Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) notion of “local” that encompasses both the most concrete and the most abstract dimensions. Locations are woven from social practices, memories, feelings and shared affections. A central point of the author’s discussion is to understand how localities are produced socially. He recalls that they are never something given, innate, but are all the time socially (re)constructed. Rites, parties, ceremonies, images circulating on electronic media are some of the elements that must be analyzed within this perspective of social construction of the local identity and the feelings of belonging that people develop by the place of origin. Locations are what people do on a daily basis, they are formed by a “network of social relationships” (Massey 1993). In this sense, the *quebrada*, especially on weekends, is the location of funk. It is the space of the city where a complex and huge network of sound systems takes to the streets reverberating funk engaging the peripheral youth. The *fluxo* acts in the continuous social (re)construction of the *quebrada* for these groups of young people.

FEEL WITHIN MUSIC

“This young lady is a terrorist, she is an expert.
Look what she does at a funk party with her friends
It’s very explosive don’t touch it
It’s very explosive don’t play with it
When she hits her ass on the floor
When she moves her ass on the floor
When she plays with her ass on the floor
When she twerks her butt on the floor “
(MC Kevinho, “Look at the Explosion”)

¹⁹ It is worth remembering here the work of Doreen Massey (1993) where it is clear how much the definition of a local identity is constructed in opposition to other locations. The periphery as a locality, and the identities that are built from it, in many cases occur in opposition to the wealthier neighborhoods of the city, more central. In the case of the younger strata, this relationship of opposition occurs in front of the State, which can appear as the *system*.



This funk by MC Kevinho played non-stop on several sound systems in a deafening volume. Two men without a shirt, in caps, dance in a synchronized step over a sound wall. It's 13:30 pm, I'm in São Bernardo do Campo at the “*baile dos bailes*” (the party among the parties), as Nitro Point is known. The sun is strong, the place has few shadows. Many people with an umbrella to protect themselves from the sun, completing the kit. The prefix Nitro is widely used in funk culture and refers to the chemical compound nitroglycerin, known for its explosive properties. One of the most famous funk clubs in São Paulo, for example, is Nitro Night. Indeed, the high potent speakers look like explosions. The feeling is that the bass explodes. I think I should have brought an ear protector and after a few minutes walking I notice that some attendees and some people on the event team are wearing ear protection. The sound of the equipment is very loud and that is the objective of the meeting: to gather sound systems.

The tip of the event was from Leetz, a young youtuber I met following your videos of *fluxos*. Nitro Point takes place one Sunday a month. It is a very representative meeting of the current São Paulo funk culture. There are thousands of cars with their powerful sound systems playing funk at high volume. It is a unique experience walking around this *fluxo*. The event cost 20 *reais* a ticket and took place in a remote location that looked like a giant parking lot. It started at eight in the morning and ended at five in the afternoon. I stood in line for an hour to get in and from the outside I could see thousands of young people dancing around hundreds of cars with their sounds. It's an impressive scene, I've never seen anything like it.

It was noticed that there are sound teams due to the presence of uniformed T-shirts and banners near some sound walls and cars. The teams sometimes gather three or four cars, side by side, all playing the same music and with the crowd dancing around. The volume of the sounds is so loud that it is practically impossible to talk at the event. I circulated for about two and a half hours and was exhausted. The heat and the pulsating sound mass sapped my strength quickly. I left the place with the impression that Nitro Point is the maximum exacerbation of the soundscape formed by the polyphony of sound systems where several speakers operate at the same time. The various funks playing at the same time form a kind of peripheral electric nitro symphony. (Field Note, November 11, 2017. Film excerpt from the event available in:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjBU0oiKSoo&list=PLFEtqli40X78cvwPIloiH1oZfkC4uWRNG&index=18>

Nitroglycerin is known for its explosive properties when used industrially in large quantities. It is also used in the manufacture of ammunition as a propellant and has allowed the manufacture of smokeless types of gunpowder. I believe that in this section of the field note the link between the name Nitro Point and the explosive properties of the massive gathering of speakers became clear. Nitro Point, also known as *baile dos bailes*, is a unique event in the greater São Paulo and one of the most important in the current funk scene. It works as a kind of great party or *fluxo* where an agglomeration of thousands of young people spend the day having fun around sound systems playing funk without interruption. Except that different from the *fluxos* of the *quebradas*, Nitro Point happens during the day, in a closed place, an entrance is charged, armed men control the fence and the access places, and accredited bars sell alcoholic beverages. It is as if it were a regulated *fluxo*, and logically, within the law, without police repression and without the tensions present in the streets of the *favelas*.



Photo 3: Nitro Point in Mauá, March 4, 2018.

Nitro Point emerged in 2003, with the objective of bringing together the crowd that enjoyed sound, parties, lowered cars and sound walls in a single place, where everyone could enjoy the ride without problems with the authorities. The event is in progress and promises to stretch for much more. Because of the organization, open skies, flexible hours and ending early, the event is a great model of how you can make it happen without disturbing the neighbor. (Nitro Point, *Baile dos Bailes* – by Jeferson Delgado, 24 August 2018, for

the Kondzilla portal, available at: <https://kondzilla.com/m/nitro-point-o-baile-dos-bailes>)

It is not because it is regulated and “does not disturb the neighbor” that young people stop having fun using different types of drugs – alcohol, marijuana, ether spray, etc. The euphoria is great, the heat of the sun is mixed with the heat of bodies soaked with sweat dancing frantically. The sound mass is so intense that even the air particles seem to pulsate around us, as if our skin felt a molecular vibration. In fact, in physical terms this gigantic sound power present at Nitro Point propagates more intensely the vibration of the surrounding molecules. It is from this vibration that sound is made – a periodic vibration of air pressure. It makes perfect sense that next to a Sound System we don’t listen to the music, but we feel it with the whole body. We feel it in the body, especially the bass that have a longer wavelength and amplitude. The enhancement of sound systems in this music is linked to the fact that certain frequencies, especially the limits of the spectrum of both bass and treble, are not reproduced by ordinary sound systems without distortion. I will continue to discuss some effects and bodily sensations of the low frequencies present in the streams, but first I invite readers to watch an excerpt from the film field diary I created on YouTube. The “*Diario-fragmento*” playlist was a way that I found to record and share moments of the field research, through short excerpts filmed with the cell phone and most of the time edited with the cell phone the day after the events observed. The bet is that these film fragments contribute to a better understanding of the text. It is also an experimentation with the possibilities that the internet offers us as researchers. This next section records another edition of Nitro Point that took place on March 4, 2018 in Mauá. It is a little longer than the previous section and surpassed the mark of 40 thousand views. Nothing replaces the physical presence at the event, but the filmic record can bring sensations that the text does not. The excerpt is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2s-8PG-FUk&list=PLFETmli40X78cvwPIloiH1oZfkC4uWRNG&index=23>

The variation in the wavelength is linked to the frequencies (low, medium and high). The variation in amplitude is linked to the intensity of the sound (stronger or weaker). In a funk sound system, where the low frequencies are highlighted, we feel the presence of waves of great length and great amplitude. Generally, sounds below 300 hertz are already considered bass, remembering that the audible limit of bass is 20 hertz. But the fact that we do not hear below 20 hz does not mean that our body is not able to feel lower frequencies.

An experiment with 25 subjects reported a “subjective sensation of body sway” when exposed to tones of 2-10 Hz above 130 dB, with the most pronounced effect at 7 Hz. Vertical nystagmus (involuntary eye movement) was also reported. Another test,

which exposed individuals to 5-10 Hz tones at 150 dB, reported nostril vibration, one tester subjected ten participants with normal hearing and ten deaf people to a 6 Hz tone at 115 dB for 20 minutes and found changes in hearing patterns. EEG (described as 'decreased wakefulness) in participants with hearing accompanied by changes in pulse and blood pressure, however, these effects were not found in deaf subjects. Other tests in the 5-10 Hz range found decreased breathing, decreased hearing blood flow in the brain and changes in pulse and blood pressure. Subjective complaints from tests in this frequency band included body vibrations, pressure in the ear and inability to concentrate. (By James Larson, December 2015, for the website: <https://www.audioholics.com/room-acoustics/bass-the-physical-sensation-of-sound>)

These data presented by James Larson on a website for audiophiles reveal bodily sensations under ultra-low frequencies – sensations that do not depend on our ears, even causing involuntary bodily movements and oscillations. Even without the use of drugs, a simple walk at Nitro Point transforms our body and throws us into an altered state of consciousness due to the continuous affect of this bass sound mass. And it was walking inside the meeting that I got a more intense body understanding about the importance of bass frequencies in all funk culture. In people's speeches, whenever I asked them to comment about the loud sound and the equipment, ideas appeared that it was to promote the party, to attract attention or to attract the audience of a bar or shop. Mariana, one of the interlocutors mentioned above, gave clues about her body aspect when she talked about how she liked the loud sound, and how she liked to "feel inside the music". This is a way that matches what you feel at Nitro Point – I felt inside the music. Immersed in music.

This resumption of Mariana's speech about feeling inside music is important, because it connects with what Bradley brings about Jamaican sound systems, and helps me to better express what happened to me in the *fluxos*, especially at Nitro Point. This sensory perspective that brings the body to anthropological analysis is linked to Tim Ingold's (2002) notion of person-organism – an entity that is affected and affects the surrounding environment and is transformed as it relates. Ingold (2002, 2007) seeks a complementarity between mind and body, between the cultural and the physical, and between our body borders and the external environment, based on James Gibson's ideas about an ecological approach to perception. Human beings are at the same time organisms experiencing ecological relationships with the environment, and people experiencing social relationships within cultural systems. "Couldn't an ecological approach to perception provide the link I was looking for between the biological life of the organism in its environment and the cultural life of the mind within

society?” (Ingold 2002, 3) Ingold’s theoretical framework sheds light on the sensory and perceptual aspects of cultures. The body in its materiality assumes a prominent place, both methodological and conceptual. What do our bodies experience in sensory terms immersed in a *fluxo* of funk? Talking about funky *musicking*, that is, bringing the elements that constitute it, describing the possible engagements of human and non-human agents, also implies addressing the materiality of the party and the bodily sensations that the sound mass causes.

In a funk *fluxo* these ecological relationships emerge as sonic relationships, that is, relationships with the environment where sound is a central element. The surface of the bodies comes into contact with the materiality of the amplified sound and has its own materiality transformed. Ingold thinks of materiality as a process, as stories to be told, and not as something fixed.


Thus, the properties of materials, considered as constituents of an environment, cannot be identified as fixed and essential attributes of things, but they are quite procedural and relational. They are not objectively determined or subjectively imagined, but experienced in practice. In this sense, every property is a condensed story. To describe the properties of materials is to tell stories of what happens to them as they flow, mix and transform. (Ingold 2007, 14).

Following this flow with Mariana and Ingold, we can sketch a social funky theory where sound systems are important non-human agents because they make us feel like we are inside music. We don’t just listen to music; we feel. Similarly, this funky social theory that connects machinic and organic bodies could teach anthropologists that we don’t just observe culture; we feel. I bring this sensory perspective at the end of this article, to state that one of the things that happens to us in a *fluxo* is a transformation of body order, even for outsiders like me.

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