

AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURE AS A MEANS OF TRANSFORMATION: SPACES,
BUSINESSES AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN BELO HORIZONTE,
BRAZIL.

by

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ABSTRACT

CAROLINA HELENA TIMÓTEO DE OLIVEIRA. Afro-Brazilian culture as a means of transformation: spaces, businesses and political participation in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.
(Under the direction of DR. OSCAR DE LA TORRE)

This research investigates the connection between race relations, hip hop and public spaces in urban Brazil. By investigating the song lyrics, I demonstrate that hip hop approaches racial relations in song lyrics in an empowering way, not only recognizing racial inequalities but also evoking changes. Hip hop, having its origins in public spaces in Brazil, stands out as a community-building culture. By analyzing the *Duelo de MCs*, a cultural occupation under the *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, I explore how hip-hop culture can be an opportunity for social mobility and the improvement of racial relations and how it can promote transformations to the space, local economy and politics.

Do race relations interfere in how and where Afro-Brazilian culture is produced in urban Brazil? Also, to what extent does Afro-Brazilian culture transform public spaces? How do cultural interventions relate to matters of race and racism? I suggest that *the Duelo de MCs* serves the community as a means of information, resistance, empowerment and social agency. Overall, I emphasize how Afro-Brazilian culture can challenge traditional patterns and build new realities.

Key words: hip hop, public space, racial relations, urban brazil.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research investigates different approaches to racial relations in Brazil and analyze how they contribute to urban cultural production and relates to the use and transformation of public spaces. Brazil is going through a long period of political and social turbulence; social and racial inequalities are some of the problems Brazil has been facing.¹ According to Domingues, Brazil has a non-declared segregation.² Although Brazil has never had a constitutional segregation, in São Paulo, for example, the inequalities demarcate the geographic place one lives in. Moema, one of the finest neighborhoods of São Paulo, has only 7.9% of black habitants. Jardim Ângela, on the other hand, is a neighborhood known for violence; 53.3% of the residents are black.³ How does this racial and social segregation interfere in how and where Afro-Brazilian culture is produced in urban Brazil? Also, to what extent does Afro-Brazilian Culture transform public spaces? How do cultural interventions relate to matters of race and racism?

To address these questions, on the first chapter called “Music and Blackness: From Harmony to the Need of Transformation”, I analyze song lyrics to discover which music style approaches race in a more empowering way, endorsing racial pride and evoking transformation. I consider the use of song lyrics to be a great instrument to analyze cultural beliefs. By reading the lyrics, I believe I will hear the voice of the most diverse Brazilian people, I will listen to their own thoughts and feelings about race relations in contemporary Brazil since literature is the place where people show their bias that they would not show anywhere else.⁴ Moreover, popular songs are a great part of a nation’s culture and it can also be a great demonstration of common thought. One single piece of popular lyrics is

reproduced many times by the artists and even more by its listeners, growing in an exponential force, the content of the lyrics is repeated tirelessly for unlimited time. More importantly, songs are never alienated from time; songs usually are a great clue to understand how certain themes are being discussed, viewed and accepted by the people.

I selected the songs in different ways, besides the ones I could remember, and the ones I could track by having race-related phrases in the title, I spent months asking Brazilian people I know for suggestions. To keep the suggestions as diverse as possible, I asked people with different ages, social classes, educational background and musical taste. I did not reject any suggestion, I included all the songs in my discography until I reached forty-seven lyrics and I thought it was enough for the purposes of this research. By analyzing these lyrics, I will find different views about race in Brazil; it is interesting to notice that even though certain views about race are considered obsolete by the scholarship, they are still a part of the nation's common thought, represented by the song lyrics. Brazilian popular music has covered many ideas on race, from the racial harmony idea, to the black pride and the need of affirmative actions. Specially after selecting the songs that approached race in an empowering way, defining the song's genres was a careful task. I did it by respecting how the own artists define their music on their social media, websites and streaming platforms. Overall, I conclude that hip-hop music tends to refer to race in a more politicized way, emphasizing pride and the need for change.

The third chapter, "Hip Hop and Public Space: 'A Bridge from Dreams to Reality,'" I explore how hip-hop culture is related to public space and how a bridge (*Viaduto Santa Tereza*) was transformed by hip-hop culture in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. To start this

investigation, it is important to acknowledge culture as a social practice. The anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”⁵ This definition emphasizes the social aspect of culture by stating that to create culture, besides being a human being, you need to be a social participant. This idea of culture as a social expression leads us to the notion of culture being connected to community. In this section, I bring some academic production and also the voice of hip hoppers to endorse that hip hop is, from its essence, a community-building culture.

Furthermore, hip hop is already connected to place because it has always been a culture that relates to the streets. Out of the nine elements of hip-hop, six are directly related to place and the streets; the street is seen as an institution.⁶ I suggest that because of racial and social inequalities, the streets are the most accessible places to host Afro-Brazilian cultures such as hip hop. According to De Certeau, “space is a practiced place,” therefore, I will refer to the areas activated by hip-hop culture as places unless I emphasize the public aspect of it in the popular colocation “public space”.⁷ Public space, for the purposes of this study, is viewed as any place that is not owned by an individual or a company. Public space is any place that was built, revitalized and kept with public money under the responsibility of governmental sectors such as streets, squares, bridges, overpasses, cultural centers, sports courts, lakes, trails and tracks. Public space is intrinsically related to hip-hop culture in Brazil, since it started in a square.⁸

How I relate to the *Viaduto Santa Tereza* interferes in my research methods. Investigating the *viaduto* to estimate hip hop's capability of transformation seemed a very natural choice for me. Born in Belo Horizonte and raised in Contagem (metro area), I started attending to the *Duelo de MCs* in 2008, when I was seventeen years old, during my last year of high school. The *viaduto* was a bridge that connected me to the world beyond my family and the middle-class private schools I have attended. I remember seeing the surprising reaction from everyone I would share that my favorite place to spend a Friday night would be under a bridge. These reactions were my first clues that the *Duelo* and everyone who worked on it were building a story what was worth telling. In 2008, the second year of *Duelo*, they would advertise that the battles would happen at *Praça da Estação* or under the *viaduto*, it was before they moved to the *viaduto* for good. This was not a problem for the audience. The subway station is at *Praça da Estação* and many buses would stop at the there or somewhere close enough for a short walk. The event stayed permanently under the *viaduto*, even though it is a smaller area; whereas *Praça da Estação* is seven square miles wide, the *viaduto* is much smaller (2000 square feet). I believe the reason why the *viaduto* became the main place for the *Duelo* is because of shelter in case of rain, but also because a smaller space offers a deeper interaction with and among the audience, a greater feeling of home, a sense of unity and protection.



FIGURE 1: The area under the *viaduto* during one of the *Duelo de MCs* editions.⁹

To investigate the transformation of our case study, *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, I mostly counted on interviews I made with the artists as primary sources. As I conducted the research while I lived in Charlotte, North Carolina, the internet was my only resource to get in touch with them and ask for thirty minutes of their time to collaborate with my research. To select the participants, I brainstormed all the artists and organizers I could remember being part of those events in 2008. I messaged all of them in their social media and the ones that replied and agreed on participating in time of the data collection, are the ones who helped me shape and support my arguments. What Áurea Carolina, Bárbara Sweet, Brisa de la Cordillera (Brisa Flow), Douglas Din, Inti Collio and Monge MC shared with me during our WhatsApp audio and video interviews led the outcome of this research. Nowadays, my participants are not in the same functions they were ten years ago; there are other young artists battling under the bridge. Still, listening to the pioneers were crucial to this research since they are the living evidence of the transformation I investigate.

The third chapter is divided into three main sections to examine the ways in which the bridge has been transformed. In “*Duelo de MCs* and the Space Transformation”, I explore the history of the *viaduto* and the impact of the *Duelo de MCs* in that place. As I started visiting the *viaduto* during its transformation, the work of João Perdigão was essential to explore the *viaduto* before it became a cultural reference.¹⁰ Perdigão’s book, *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, is part of a collection about important spots in Belo Horizonte and it was released few months before I started my research. The book was not available online, but with the mediation of three people, including the author, I could have the book in time to enrich this research. For this section, the use of information online was fundamental. Online reviews, and posts on social media were used to assess this transformation, as a way of listening to the most diverse voices of the audience.

Then, in “Businesses”, I demonstrate how the *viaduto* as a cultural spot has been affecting local businesses and providing networking opportunities for young artists. All of the artists I interviewed attributed to the *Duelo de MCs* a big portion of how they developed professionally and who they are today. Besides the information shared during the interviews, again, the online information on social media was essential to support my argument as well as a documentary by Ana Estrela e Bárbara Viggiano produced in 2012 featuring sixteen rappers who shared the history of the *Duelo de MCs* and the impact of it to their lives.

Finally, in “Political Participation”, I investigate how this cultural movement can serve as a way to evoke political participation, practice citizenship and improve racial

relations. For this section, I use two editions of the *Duelo do Conhecimento* (Knowledge Battle): one of 2012, part of Estrela and Viggiano's documentary, whose theme was "The City We Want" and one battle of 2015 when the theme was the age reduction for criminal responsibilities. I chose these two because I could notice that the rappers' ideas were in agreement with a political agenda that seeks social and racial equality. Moreover, I was part of the audience in the battle of 2015 and I remember how impacting that afternoon was, being sure that *Duelo de MCs* was much more than just entertainment. One specific interview was central to this section: Áurea Carolina, the most voted city counselor in the elections of 2016 shared how her involvement with hip-hop culture and the public spaces in Belo Horizonte contributed to where she is and guided her struggle not only as a politician but also as an artist and activist.

Overall, I suggest that these cultural occupations are perceived as more than just entertainment but also a means of information, resistance, empowerment and social agency; indeed, I emphasize how Afro-Brazilian culture can challenge traditional patterns and build new realities. Powerful cultural activations like this have been transforming public spaces and enlightening an area that used be abandoned in Belo Horizonte. In this new place, transformation arises and new political initiatives are installed.

2. MUSIC AND BLACKNESS: FROM HARMONY TO THE NEED OF TRANSFORMATION

This chapter investigates how different musical styles approach blackness and also how racial empowerment dialogues with hip-hop culture. In Brazil, the miscegenation of African, European and Indigenous peoples resulted in a very diverse spectrum of skin color and physical features. The definition of an Afro-Brazilian is fluid and the lines that separate black and white are unclear.¹¹ However, the fact that it is hard to trace a line on racial definitions does not mean that there are no lines; additionally, it does not imply that these lines do not matter.¹² In the 1900s, there was a belief by political authorities that racial discrimination and inequality were not an issue in Brazil.¹³ In 1977, when Brazil was still in a military regime, the President Ernesto Geisel stated that Brazil had a profound “respect for human rights” due to “the absence of racial and religious prejudice”. According to the military President, “Brazil is really perhaps an example to the world, with its multi-racial society coexisting in harmony.”¹⁴ Still during the 70s, the MNU (*Movimento Negro Unificado*) was created and fought for racial equality by emphasizing black pride and democratic access to higher education.¹⁵ As a result of black movements’ efforts, in 1996, Brazil had the first president to acknowledge the existence of racial discrimination in the country and the need for affirmative actions in order to combat inequality.¹⁶ President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s statement marked a beginning of public policies related to affirmative actions in Brazil. In the 2000’s, during PT (Workers’ Party) government, there were a series of actions such as the Law that makes Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory at schools and quotas to universities’ admissions; these measures contributed to

the debate on race and racism in Brazil and also in how race is depicted in song lyrics. In this chapter, I will explore how music lyrics can endorse or protest each of these views about race; from the racial harmony idea to the need of measures to decrease racial inequalities. Overall, I argue that rap music tends to mention race in a politicized approach evoking change; which is very common in hip-hop culture.¹⁷

2.1 Blackness in Song Lyrics

I feel like Brazil is in debt with diversity
The country applauds miscegenation when it is to make us whiter
When it makes us darker, the country condemn us.
Emicida – Afro-Brazilian Rapper during interview.¹⁸

The purpose of this section is to analyze race in Brazil by relating song lyrics with academic research and contemporary political changes: I will investigate which music genre treats blackness in a more politicized way, questioning matters of pride and inequality and instigating change. I analyze forty-seven lyrics chosen randomly from many different musical genres including *axé* (traditional dancing and *carnaval* music from the Northeast region of the country), rap, *samba* (considered the most original Brazilian rhythm), *pagode* (derivation of *samba*), MPB (rhythm similar to *samba*, but with more variations, acronym for Brazilian Popular Music), *baião* (similar to *forró*, traditional music from the North and Northeast regions, it usually takes two partners to dance), *funk carioca* (upbeat rhythm originated from low classes in Rio de Janeiro) and pop.¹⁹ The only condition for selection is that the lyrics must mention race or any idea related to race. I suggest that, as popular music may carry “warm, deep, complex ideas, views, opinions, and claims”, in lyrics we

see practical examples argued by academics.²⁰ I also observe that the lyrics may treat race differently according to the music style.

The idea of racial harmony in Brazil has been spread over the years by some academics and also popularly. Gilberto Freyre heavily contributed to this idea by promoting that miscegenation in colonial Brazil had corrected social inequalities. According to him, the mixing of races made the three races (white, black and indigenous) closer to each other.²¹ Silva e Paixão consider that, traditionally, popular artists have contributed to the propagation of the idea that miscegenation is the essence of the Brazilian nation in the beginning of the 20th century. Part of the collected lyrics contribute to this cordial relations idea, lyrics with notions of Afro-Brazilian terminology such as *neguinha*, *morena*, *negão* and *ébano* are used to refer to someone who is desired with no further allusion to racial conflicts, issues and inequalities.²² Even though this is a new release, “Nossa Cor” (2014) by Léo Santana is a great example of the idea of a Racial Democracy being sung by an Afro-Brazilian man. Léo Santana starts his song by addressing discrimination and concluding it is lack of love:

They talk about us,
they talk about our color.
Even nowadays there are people without love.²³

After praising names of famous Black people from different places of the world, the *axé* singer invites people who are not black to join his song because there will not be prejudice. It is important to notice that even though the speaker recognizes there is discrimination against Afro-Brazilians, he invites all races to come together in order to eradicate inequalities which is exactly what Gilberto Freyre suggests.²⁴ Unfortunately,

available data shows that miscegenation did not make all Brazilians equal: race still influences the places one occupies in Brazilian society. For instance, nonwhites are three times more likely to be poor or illiterate in Brazil and white men earn more than nonwhite men.²⁵

Further, in an attempt of a very broad inclusion, the singer includes Claudia Leitte and Thiaguinho in his list of praise saying that they are both *negros*. Claudia Leitte is also an *axé* singer, she has blond and straight hair, thin nose and lips, and tanned skin.



FIGURE 2: Claudia Leitte.²⁶

Although she defines herself and an afro-blonde woman, she is hardly read as a black woman by Brazilian society.²⁷ Self-declaration is currently the main method to define race in Brazil, this is how IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) provide all the data and censuses.²⁸ Differently from the United States, in Brazil one drop of African blood does not make one nonwhite. As race definition is quite fluid due to miscegenation,

“Brazilians often prefer the notion of color rather than race”; thus, this definition is very connected to how you look rather than how you see yourself.²⁹ Claudia Leitte might define herself as “afro-blonde”, yet she is seen as a white person. As skin color say much about how one is defined racially, someone with light skin tones commonly enjoy racial privileges.³⁰ On the other hand, the *pagode* singer Thiaguinho has afro hair, dark skin complexion, full lips and large nostrils; he is undoubtedly a black man.



FIGURE 3: Thiaguinho.³¹

I believe that including Claudia Leitte in the same racial definition as Thiaguinho is an attempt of promoting the idea that that no matter how you look, every Brazilian has some African blood, therefore we build one Brazilian race. Nevertheless, this notion is debunked as we can see in the next lyrics and academic contributions.

In spite of this racial harmony idea, Brazilian history has presented pieces where nation built and the construction of the Brazilian identity is connected to discrimination rather than harmony. Barbara Weinstein, in *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil*, addresses how exclusion was used as a strategy of how *Paulistas* built their identity in the 1930s.³² The notion of *Paulista* identity was based on their concept of whiteness, progressiveness and development in opposition to the *Nordeste*'s backwardness, traditionalism, regionalism and underdevelopment.³³ Almost a century later, we can still observe that *nordestinos* in São Paulo remain victims of hate crimes, social inequalities and unequal opportunities, since they largely hold blue-collar jobs and have limited access to formal education and culture. The battle between North/Northeast and South/Southeast Brazil cannot be apart from race issues since the fourteen Brazilian states with the biggest concentration of blacks and *pardos* are located in the North and Northeast of the country.³⁴

The idea that miscegenation was not enough to correct racial inequalities is seen in Silva and Paixão's chapter titled "Mixed and Unequal: New Perspectives on Brazilian Ethnoracial Relations" where they explore and challenge the idea of racial democracy by using the strong and meaningful PERLA (Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America) data and conclude that racial mixture and racial inequality coexists in Brazil. This idea is clearly seen in this *samba* by the rapper Renan Inquérito; he uses the flower rose as a metaphor for a black and poor woman named Rose. In his lyrics, he tells that Rose has seen different kind of roses, with different colors, and she questions if diversity is so natural, "Why does my color bother them so much?" My answer to Rose would be that her color

bothers because the Brazilian society has always been racialized and has never lived in harmony. Similarly, Afolabi argues that there is an “invisible hierarchy” and any black person who attempts to challenge it is considered threatening.³⁵ Historically, Racial inequalities in Brazil started being treated as a reality between the 1960s and 1970s.³⁶ One of the reasons why the population became more aware of this was the availability of data; statistics made most people believe that inequality in Brazil was racialized.³⁷ The debate about race in Brazil has changed throughout the history of the country. In the late 70s the foundation of the Unified Black Movement (*Movimento Negro Unificado*, MNU) marked a new direction in the debate; this new direction would distance from the racial democracy idea that became popular in the 30s.³⁸

Some of the selected lyrics express racial conflicts and address matters of racism. In “*Alforria*” (2014), the band Forfun criticizes the bad living conditions of the poor by comparing a crowded bus to a moving *senzala* (the housing of Africans who were brought and enslaved in Brazil). *O Rappa* (1994) goes further and compares the backseat of a police car with a slave ship, criticizing the fact that the incarcerated population in Brazil is predominantly black. This is a very pertinent topic since Brazil is the 3rd biggest country in terms of imprisoned population. There are 724 thousand people in the Brazilian prison system and 64% of them are Afro-Brazilians.³⁹ This is associated with racial inequalities since Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery.

The criticism to racial inequalities is also seen in GOG’s brilliant lyrics, “Brasil com P” (2000). The poet writes a whole song only using words that start with the letter “p”. GOG does not only sing isolated words; he managed to attribute meaning to the lyrics by

addressing several issues in Brazil and emphasizes the police brutality toward the Afro-Brazilian population. Also, Rael, in “*Só Não Posso (Remix)*” (2013) discusses the stereotype of drugs being associated with black people and symbols of African culture such as dreadlocks.

Further, the rapper Emicida in “*Cê Lá Faz Idéia*” (2010) reveals many uncomfortable situations black people face in their everyday lives because of the racial discrimination and stereotypes. He also criticizes the education system, which is weak and unprepared to deal with the challenges a marginalized student brings to the classroom. In 2003, the federal congress approved Law 10.639, which made mandatory the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and African topics in elementary and secondary schools.⁴⁰ However, the band Aláfia, in “*Mulher da Costa*” (2013) suggests that this law is only theatrical since there is a huge gap between what the law reinforces and what has been done in reality. In fact, it has been fourteen years since the law was approved in the national congress but it has not been applied in an efficient way. Teaching Afro-Brazilian and African topics is still something that depends on the teacher and it is not stated in the lesson plan.⁴¹ Indeed, Thiago Elniño, Gabriel O Pensador, Gilberto Gil, Inquerito and Criolo are very successful to address racial inequality, racial definition and how tense racial relations can be when it is inferred that each race belongs to a certain step on the social ladder. In general, these lyrics have a negative or even pessimistic mood due to the gravity of the approached theme. They are very helpful to understand how racial relations take place in contemporary Brazilian society.⁴²

As previously stated, in 1996, the president Fernando Henrique Cardoso acknowledged the existence of racial inequality in the country and supported the implementation of affirmative actions in Brazil.⁴³ Due to investments in affirmative actions and the results achieved by black activism, it has become more common to find songs that deal with race in prouder and more positive way. As the PERLA data shows, a higher number of responses related to pride were found around the 2000s; I suggest that the occurrence of this mood in the most recent lyrics shows that music lyrics are connected to social improvements.⁴⁴ In 2012, the President Dilma Rousseff signed into a law, making mandatory the implementation of admissions quotas in all federal universities. Since this measure, every federal university set aside 50% of admissions for students who are black, indigenous, from public schools, or disabled. The argument is that the federal universities should match the country demographics.⁴⁵ Having more access to federal universities that have been an elitist place for decades was a big victory to racial equality in Brazil and it affected the life of the black population in Brazil including their self-esteem. The sense of belonging and being able to achieve certain privileges can be seen in this *samba* lyrics by Moacyr Luz (2013):

Black people eat sashimi, drink champagne and also have Rolex
 Why are you surprised?
 Black people can have the same as you
 Black people are charming,
 eat meat, have private driver
 Travel by plane, the best soccer player, changes the silverware
 Black people read the magazine *Exame*,
 spend vacations in Miami, Molière awards,
 reserve a suite, wear fancy clothes, visit places
 Why are you surprised?
 Black people can have the same as you.⁴⁶

The need of defining race made racial relations a more popular topic in Brazil and each year the people self-declaring as black or mixed (*pretos ou pardos*) are growing. Andrew M. Francis and Maria Tannuri-Pianto (2013) developed a research among quota students in Brasília (Capital of Brazil) and concluded that after the adoption of racial quotas, lighter-skinned students were less likely to self-identify as white and darker-skinned students were, more likely to self-identify as black (*preto*).⁴⁷ One may argue that students are darkening their identity to have access to the quota system, but I believe the debate on racial identity made people realize their blackness (*negritude*). One example of it is Flávia, a participant of André Cicalo's research in 2012. On their first meetings, Flávia appeared to be very uncomfortable when discussing her racial identity. After a few meetings talking to the author about her experience as a *parda* student, she started to describe herself as *negra* and demonstrated much more confidence when arguing about racial inequality in Brazil.⁴⁸

Another example of seeing black ethnicity in a positive way and fighting racism, is found in Rincon Sapiência's song. In Brazil, there is a very popular expression in which "things are black" means that things are bad. It is very common to see the color black being associated with negative connotations. Rincon Sapiência, on the other hand, decides to use this expression by challenging its original meaning. According to the rapper, if things are black, you bet they are good:

Let's go, let's go, let's go!
 Don't be lazy lazy lazy
 We're are doing it, doing it, doing it
 Things are Black! Black!

More than a manifesto, this song is also calling black people to fight the everyday struggle. On his official channel on YouTube, the rapper states that the song means to

recover black people's self-esteem by providing positive references to their race and also by reinforcing the ideal that black people are also descendant of kings (as he mentions Zumbi and Nzinga):⁴⁹

We dance the tribal rhythm in the party
 We revenge for every ancestor on the log
 Each black man feels like Zumbi
 Each black woman feels like Nzinga

As a matter of fact, Portuguese language has plenty of racist expressions in which “black” has a negative connotation.⁵⁰ Jorge Aragão, in *Identidade* (Identity) also refutes racism in the Brazilian expression: “black person with a white soul”. This saying suggests that even though someone is black, they can be good on the inside. It actually excuses one's blackness and not only harms black identity but elevates whiteness as well. The *sambista* Jorge Aragão sings that if it meant to be a compliment, it “does not help, it only makes us suffer”. By questioning socially constructed racism through lyrics, these artists find a way of contributing to the black empowerment and pride.

Recent research, the PERLA data, shows that people who self-declare as black have the highest amount of pride towards their racial identity.⁵¹ Lyrics that celebrate black pride are extremely important for this research because I argue they not only represent empowerment and racial identity but they also serve as the fuel that leads to transformation. Afolabi (2013) calls this empowerment “vital force”; the author argues that this vital force is used to define new discourses into tools of cultural production, resistance and survival.⁵² A selection of nineteen songs out of the forty-seven lyrics display contents that approach racism and racial inequality; yet, these lyrics go beyond addressing racial issues and also

build strength to the oppressed race. For instance, Ndee Naldinho states that his song is a response to the racist and affirms matters of pride of being who he is and coming from where he comes from. Matters of pride and praise of the Afro-Brazilian features is present in all of these lyrics.⁵³ Out of these nineteen songs, eleven are raps, three are *sambas*, three are MPBs and two are *funk cariocas*. Being rap, samba and funk Afro-Brazilian rhythms, I argue that Afro-Brazilian culture tends to approach race in an empowering manner. Even more, as the selected hip-hop productions demonstrate, “hip hop has become a new form of social discursive engagement activated by youth cultures”.⁵⁴ I suggest that hip hop, a culture of African heritage, is the musical genre that most considers blackness as resistance and empowerment contributing to community-building and transformation.

Emicida's music video, *Mandume*, directed by Gabi Jacob, is an interesting case of how hip-hop songs takes black pride to a higher level and they can be instrument to foment changes not only related to race but also to other intersectional social issues.⁵⁵ To start with the title, *Mandume*, is a reference to the last king of Kwanyama, Mandume Ya Ndemufayo. He is known for being a symbol of resistance against the Portuguese colonization.⁵⁶ By choosing this title, Emicida is sending a message to his audience and providing an occasion for them to gain some unpopular knowledge. Unfortunately, African history is not deeply taught in Brazilian schools as the band *Aláfia* posited in "*Mulher da Costa*". Choosing a South African/Namibian hero as the title of his song is a way to induce his audience to research who he was and to reflect how the song relates to the person. I argue that the song is trying to fight the oppression just like the hero did and Emicida does it in three different

ways: Praising blackness and African heritage, community building and recognizing intersectionality.

Praise of blackness and African heritage is noticed in many aspects. The rap beat often interacts with African drums and there is also a *funk carioca* influence.⁵⁷ The video also exhibits a scene where two Afro-Brazilian women with *candomblé* attire are "defeated" by a lighter-skin man's bible; after the women's fall, a fire pit gets higher flames "defeating" the man with his bible. I believe this is a symbology for Afro-Brazilian religions fighting oppression and trying to survive in a predominately Catholic and Protestant country. Moreover, although the cast is not 100% black (*negro*), it is definitely the majority; many different skin complexions, body shapes and sizes integrate the diversity in the video. In one of the indoor shots, there is a poster on the wall written "I just want peace" (*Eu só quero sossego*) which is an allusion to a song by Tim Maia, an Afro-Brazilian man who is one of the most important soul voices in Brazilian history. Further, aesthetically, we can observe several pieces of clothing with African-like patterns, accessories and t-shirts with messages stamped; these messages display pride towards hip-hop culture, black-owned businesses and low-income neighborhoods (*quebrada*).⁵⁸ One of the stamped t-shirts has the African term *ubuntu* (in Bantu language) written; it means that a person is a person through other people.⁵⁹ This idea of collective achievements is very common in hip-hop culture and it leads us to the next theme in Emicida's music video: community-building.

Community-building is initially perceived when the rapper invites five more artists to compose the track: Drik Barbosa, Amiri, Rico Dalasam, Muzzike and Raphão Alaafin are five Afro-Brazilian rappers who are less popular than Emicida. By inviting them to write

and record the song with him, Emicida shares his spotlight and fortifies his community. The wish to see other black people on top is also perceived in a scene where two young black people stare at a newsstand outraged because the magazines had only white people on their covers. Then, they stick pictures of famous Afro-Brazilian artists, business owners and politicians on top of those magazine covers.⁶⁰ This scene not only fortifies the Afro-Brazilian community but also challenges the norm and foments the debate about black representation on media.

Intersectionality is a common practice in activism. Milton Barbosa, MNU founder (*Movimento Negro Unificado*), shares the belief that fighting one oppression is only effective if you recognize and fight for the others too. According to the activist, racism is always connected to sexism and other “isms”. For this reason, the MNU is known for working along with other oppressions that are also harmful for the humanity.⁶¹ Emicida’s music video related to women’s rights in explicit ways. First of all, the presence of women is very strong. Many times, women are silenced and overlooked in hip-hop culture. However, in *Mandume*, Drik Barbosa, a female black rapper is the first one to sing the rhyming verses. As a matter of fact, during the video, men and women are given the same focus (or at least really similar). The t-shirts also display feminist messages such as Girl Boss, Respect all of us women.⁶² Additionally, in the music video, women are portrayed as fighters and are associated to strength. There is a scene where two women are harassed on the street and they verbally react to the aggressor. The video also interacts with the LGBT+ agenda; there is a scene where someone who was designated male at birth is dressed in women clothes, wearing makeup, earrings and a wig. There is no way to determine if he is

a man performing as a drag queen or if she is a transgender woman.⁶³ Either way, by including individuals representative of women's and LGBT+ rights, this music video challenges the sexist culture still pervasive in the rap community. Rico Dalasam, the first openly gay male rapper who was able to achieve national recognition for his music, is singing the lyrics during this scene. At some point the Drag Queen/Transgender woman stops in front of a dancing crowd; one of the people in this crowd makes a sign indicating that the Drag Queen/Transgender woman is welcome to join them and have fun. This is an evidence of how inclusive the video aims to be; in my opinion, it meets its purpose.

Overall, the music video is extremely powerful. It is a masterpiece that fits very well the strong verses in the song. The constant references to boxe, martial arts, images of police activity in shopping malls and clenched fists consolidate the idea that Afro-Brazilians are strong, struggling to survive and fueling changes. I highlight some verses in Drik Barbosa, Amiri, Rafael Tudesco, Rico Dalasam, Muzzike, Raphão Alaafin and Emicida's lyrics that contribute to the opus:

They that want someone who comes from where we are from
 to be humbler, lower your head,
 never retaliate, pretend you forgot the whole thing
 (...)
 So much offense, intense struggle denies my presence.
 Enough! I am a voice of the black women who integrate resistance
 (...)
 Without identity we are objects of History
 (...)
 Do they sniff fear out? They will need more nose
 (...)
 I am not tamable, I do not want your crime
 (...)
 Playboys who understand what it was to have our feet chained were not born yet.
 (...)
 If misery is tough, man, I am tougher.

This chapter analyzed how race is portrayed in song lyrics. This analysis demonstrated that, among the forty-seven lyrics, we can find lyrics that endorse different ways of seeing race, from the racial harmony idea, to the acknowledgment of racial inequalities and the need of transforming this scenario. Especially after the 2000s, especially in rap lyrics, expressions of black pride became more common. Several artists dedicate uncountable hours to spread the idea of blackness in a positive way, celebrating each feature of their African heritage and promoting self-esteem as a fuel to black people's everyday struggles. For the most part, hip-hop music has demonstrated to be more engaged and more aware of racial issues than other musical genres and understanding this feature of hip hop is crucial to observe how it has been changing communities and social perceptions. Indeed, hip hop, as an Afro-Brazilian cultural expression, is a tool to support changes and build stronger communities. The next chapter investigates how hip-hop is related to place and how this culture can transform public spaces, providing opportunities for the community and collaborating to social mobility.

3. HIP HOP AND PUBLIC SPACE: “A BRIDGE FROM DREAMS TO REALITY”

The open mics had to take over the bars
Because the library was not the place for poetry
At the library, we had to be silent
And there, people think too much of themselves”⁶⁴

The citation above is a parody of the well-known Brazilian song called “Cálice” by Chico Buarque de Hollanda e Milton Nascimento.⁶⁵ “Cálice’s” original lyrics are about the repression during the dictatorship period in Brazil, but the Afro-Brazilian rapper Criolo changed the lyrics to talk about a current and ongoing repression: social and racial inequalities in Brazil. This parody went viral and he became known taking black pride in his own artistic name; *criolo* in racist contexts is used to offend a black person, by baptizing himself as Criolo, the artist re-signifies the word by adding pride to it; racial empowerment through hip-hop culture seems to be a growing tendency as analyzed in the last chapter.

This part of Criolo’s parody display a possible relation of Afro-Brazilian culture with Public Spaces in urban Brazil; because of discrimination, marginalized cultures are compelled to be performed in nontraditional places. In this chapter, I explore how public spaces can be the shelter for marginalized cultures such as hip hop. Further, I investigate the *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, a public space in Belo Horizonte, Brazil that was transformed by hip-hop culture. I suggest that hip-hop culture in Belo Horizonte has been transforming not only the space, but also small businesses and local politics, consequently improving race relations. In *Duelo de MCs* and the Space Transformation, I will investigate how *Viaduto Santa Tereza* has changed over the last decade, how the Duelo de MCs contributed to it and comprehend how the *viaduto*’s meaning may go beyond the traditional form of

understanding the purpose of a bridge. In the second section, Businesses, I argue that cultural movements are also a way of moving the local economy, providing opportunities for informal work and serving as a network environment for artists. Finally, in the third section, I explore how this cultural occupation contributes to politics, and how it affects political participation and race relations.

Hip hop is characteristically connected to places, since the four traditional elements of this culture include not only deejaying and emceeing (which are the technical elements of rap music), but also breakdancing and graffiti art; these two last elements are related to spatial arts since they involve performing and visual arts.⁶⁶ Additionally, Brazilian hip-hop is intrinsically related to public spaces because it all started at a public space: *Praça São Bento*.⁶⁷ I believe social and racial discrimination directly speaks with the use of public space. As Criolo stated, public or semi-public spaces became one option for the culture that was not being accepted in traditional places such as libraries. Similarly, from a North American perspective, William Oliver posits the street as an institution “that exists primarily to meet the psychological and social needs of socially and economically marginalized Black males.”⁶⁸

Besides being a place for the marginalized, the streets are also a place for diversity and cultural production. By analyzing the “location of culture”, Homi Bhabha (1990) addresses some factors that interfere in the construction of one's identity such as race, gender, age, generation, geopolitical location and sexual orientation.⁶⁹ These factors also interfere in what a social agent understands by culture, how they experience it and relate to it. That being the case, even though two or more people share the same geographical

location, they may carry distinct elements that result in different cultures, this hybridism is part of how culture is created and negotiated in urban spaces. According to Mignolo (2005), Latin America is naturally a world where many worlds co-exist; the cultural negotiation among these worlds.⁷⁰ In a process of adjusting, disadjusting and readjusting, one culture does not simply assimilate the other; as Ortiz (1940) observes, transculturation takes place. According to Ortiz, transculturation is the process of creating a culture base on the interaction of other cultures.⁷¹ Similarly, Bhabha posits that when two different cultures emerge, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation is created. As it is common that every human being carries a belonging sentiment to more than one social group, this negotiation among cultures and identities creates an “in-between space” called the Third Space.⁷² As suggested by Mattos, the third space may function as a motivation for creation and empowerment; for the Afro-Brazilian community, it is expressed by organizing as a community, political participation and the strengthening of black culture.⁷³ I argue that, for Afro-Brazilian youth, this immaterial space materializes on the street. A Facebook user describes *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, a place that is known for hosting marginalized culture, as a place “where everybody meets each other to keep the rap and hip-hop flame alive. Our crew is not money rich but rich in talent and culture.”⁷⁴ Being that, the socially marginalized culture finds shelter under the *viaduto* in order to survive by using its most valuable goods: talent and culture; thus, this place became a place for creation and empowerment.

3.1 *Duelo de MCs* and the Space Transformation

This section investigates the Transformation of *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, from an abandoned space to one of the most important cultural spots in the city and a reference to Brazilian hip-hop culture. To achieve this goal, first, I present a brief history of the *viaduto* and I also refer to the first cultural movements that took place under that bridge emphasizing the *Duelo de Mcs*, the most relevant event that takes place under the bridge. Moreover, I ponder the importance of the streets and socialization for hip-hop culture and demonstrate how the *viaduto* means more than a bridge for artists and audience in Belo Horizonte.

In 1926, the engineer Emilio Henrique Baumgart led the beginning of the construction of his project, o *Viaduto Santa Tereza*.⁷⁵ The engineer, who had already led other major symbols of Brazilian architecture such as Copacabana Palace, in Rio de Janeiro, participated in a project that would solve flooding issues in the region. The bridge was the biggest construction of reinforced concrete in Latin America.⁷⁶ After its inauguration, in 1929, the city Belo Horizonte, with less than 100 thousand habitants at the time, started to look like a big city; the *viaduto* was a symbol of progress.⁷⁷ Nine decades later, the 2.5 million *belorizontinos* (people who were born in Belo Horizonte) plus the 2.5 million habitants of Belo Horizonte metro area found different meanings and usages for this bridge. The community, the urban youth and Afro-Brazilian culture expanded the meaning of the *viaduto*. Nowadays, it is seen as an important cultural spot, a place of opportunities and an extension of people's homes.

The *viaduto* is located in the region called “*hiper-centro*” which is basically the core of downtown Belo Horizonte. The map above shows the *hiper-centro*, the *viaduto* is where

Avenida Assis Chateaubriand is, indicated with the blue arrow. The area under the viaduto is integrated with the street *Aarão Reis*, indicated with the green arrow. This area is called the “*baixo centro*”, which can be translated to “low downtown”; it gives a sense of low status since “low” is easily read as the opposite of “upper”. Accordingly, the area is at the margin of the *hiper-centro* and also socially marginalized.



FIGURE 4: Map of *hiper-centro* in Belo Horizonte.⁷⁸

The viaduto is *tombado*, which means it is protected by the state as a Cultural Patrimony. It has been noticed in literature and cinema; it appears in the work of the *mineiros* writers Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Fernando Sabino and the *viaduto* was also the scenery for the movie *Bang Bang* (1971) by Andrea Tonacci.⁷⁹ However, the

cultural occupation of the *viaduto* has never been a governmental initiative; the cultural occupation at the *viaduto* took place in an alternative context, in a bottom up process.

One of the first cultural activities under the bridge was in 2000, when Brazil celebrated 500 years since Portugal invaded our land and named us “*Pau-Brasil*” initially.⁸⁰ Mostly punk rock and rap groups in Belo Horizonte organized a music festival called “Outros 500”; bands and MCs were questioning the appeal of celebrating colonization. The festival’s name is well suited to the purpose of the event that wanted to take a stand in another direction, more than just meaning “The other 500s” referring to a different approach to the same celebration, the idiomatic expression “outros 500” in Portuguese is commonly used to express “other things”. I suggest this festival carries a lot of what the *viaduto* means today: a place that welcome “other things” as marginalized bodies and cultures; a place to question oppressive ideas and revolutionize the norm.⁸¹

The first constant occupation was one called “*Domingo Nove e Meia*” (Sunday at 9:30), the encounter, as the title suggests used to happen every first Sunday of the month at 9:30. A group of cultural producers, artists and citizens reunited once a month from 2007 to 2010 to promote “appropriation of public space with autonomists and libertarian ideals”. The anti-capitalists, as they call themselves, promoted “shows, parties, soccer games, barbecues, *sambas*, performances, soirees, recyclable drums workshops and even Christmas celebration” in order to “elaborate ideas and evolve consciences” in an autonomous culture context.⁸²

Duelo de MCs was the first big and frequent event to take place under the *viaduto*. In 2007, a collective called *Família de Rua* (Street Family) started promoting rap battles

between local MCs at *Praça da Estação* (Station Square). One rainy night, in search for shelter, the MCs and the still small audience moved to *Viaduto Santa Tereza*, located 0.2 miles away from the square.⁸³ After *Duelo de MCs* appropriation of that space, the *viaduto* was never the same. Now, it is a cultural destination and the most famous cultural bridge of Brazil and it is the spot for many social activities that extrapolates hip-hop culture. Nowadays, under the *viaduto*, you can see a little bit of everything; there is a variety of activities there such as sports competitions, dance classes, workshops on how to wear turban, LGBTQ get together, *bloco de carnaval* practice, urban dance performances, soul/funk block party, music festivals, rap battles, occupations and protests.⁸⁴ All the events under the *viaduto* are free, which makes its use inclusive and democratic. These events move thousands and thousands of people to that area transforming the environment; the area now is a cultural center.

Duelo de MCs is much more than just a rap battle, it is a celebration of hip-hop culture that embraces diversity and debates social and political issues. There are three rap battle modalities: Traditional battle, *bate e volta* battle and knowledge battle. The traditional battle has two rounds and each MC has forty-five seconds (in each round) to improvise verses that usually attacks his opponent. A third round will be needed in case it is too hard to decide on the first two rounds. The *bate e volta* is a faster version of the traditional battle, instead of having forty-five seconds, the two MCs alternate their rhymes on the same beat for about two minutes. In the knowledge battle, the MC has one minute to rhyme about a pre-established theme. These themes vary from any social or political subject and also about

hip-hop culture. It is usually only one round, but there will be a second one in case of tie. Further, there are other battle modalities such as Battle of DJs and break-dancing battles.



FIGURE 5: Break-dancing battle under the viaduto.⁸⁵

During the first years, the audience decided which MC had the best performance on stage. However, the collective *Família de Rua* found it would be fairer if there were two judges on stage to vote and the audience would have the third vote. The winner is awarded with a trophy made out of a spray can and also an amount of money (which varies). Besides the battle, the *Duelo de MCs* often have pocket shows during the event, big names of Brazilian music such as Emicida, Rapadura, Marechal, Dalasam have performed on that stage and also it is an opportunity to local artists to showcase their work. In every edition, there is graffiti on stage and also other kinds of visual arts. For example, the picture below

shows a graffiti that the artist Kawany Tamoyos (Kakaw) painted during a *Duelo* edition in March of 2018. The painting shows an indigenous woman and the saying “Não Foi Cabral”, alluding to the idea that the Portuguese invaded a land that belongs to the indigenous peoples in the fifteenth century.



FIGURE 6: Graffiti by the artist Kawany Tamoyos (Kakaw).⁸⁶

The *viaduto* is on a well-located spot in the city when it comes to public transportation and this is directly related to the diversity of the audience. The *viaduto* is about 0.2 miles away from the train station (*Estação Central*) and hundreds of different buses serve that area. In a research with quota students in Rio de Janeiro, André Cicalo found that the kind of transportation each student would use was determinant when it came to socializing. According to the author, transportation can be seen as a reference of a “segregating element”.⁸⁷ Having *Duelo de MCs* next to a train station makes the access to

the event even more democratic. People from different parts of the city and even the metro area can access the *viaduto* without depending on cars or any other kind of private transportation.

Analyzing a survey with about 155 members of the audience, the researcher Luiz Fernando Campos de Andrade Júnior found out that 74% of them are from Belo Horizonte (there were people from every single region of the city), 22% were from the metro area (Contagem, Nova Lima, Santa Luzia, Sabará, Betim e Ribeirão das Neves) and about 2% were from Minas Gerais countryside or from another state.⁸⁸ Among the ones who participated in the survey, 51.6% are men, 48.4% women; their age varies from about 15 to 36 years old.⁸⁹ About the racial demographics, the *Duelo*'s audience are similar do the country's: 52.2% *negros* (black or mixed), 42% white, 4.5% *amarelo* (Asian descendent), 1.3% indigenous. Having racial demographics in the *Duelo* similar to the diversity found in Brazil, is an evidence that the *viaduto* is an inclusive place.

From 2007 to June 2013, the battles used to happen every Friday night. From June 2013 to November 2013, the *Duelo de MCs* had a hiatus due to violence and criminal activity that happened in parallel to the cultural event. Naturally, in a country where there is a huge problem of racial and social inequality, crime is part of the daily life. Even with the campaign "respect the Duelo de MCs" in which hip hoppers, organizers and general audience fought to keep criminal activities out of that place during the events, the *viaduto* on Friday evenings was becoming a weekly appointment to sell and use drugs, taking advantage of the crowded place and difficulty to be noticed or caught. During this hiatus, *O Tempo*, a well-known local newspaper released a story called "The silence in the rap's

viaduto” highlighting the importance of this cultural movement and giving voice to the organizers to explain why they would take a break for indeterminate time.⁹⁰ Fortunately, five months later, the *viaduto* hosted the comeback of the *Duelo de MCs*, now taking place every other Sunday afternoon. The change was necessary to administrate issues about the usage of that place.

Duelo de MCs not only transformed that place in terms of its use but also gave a new projection to that place. Emicida, a respected rapper and reference in Brazilian hip hop, once was questioned on national TV if rap music in Rio de Janeiro was better than rap in São Paulo. Emicida answered:

Actually, nowadays I believe that the place that has the most interesting initiatives is Belo Horizonte. And I think this is awesome because it deviates from the Rio-São Paulo core. (..) Nowadays, the *Duelo de MCs*, the battle’s name in Belo Horizonte is the most interesting one.⁹¹

Marília Gabriela, a well-known journalist who was interviewing the rapper, could not hide the surprise. I believe it was also a shock to the audience. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are the most famous metropolitan cities in Brazil and usually the center of arts, especially urban arts. Brazilian hip hop started in São Paulo so it is common to think that the best initiatives are from there or Rio de Janeiro which is similar to São Paulo in size and development. However, Emicida’s answer supports the idea that *Duelo de MCs* is promoting a transformation of that place that extrapolates that geographical location and is reaching much further.⁹²

Since 2012, the *Família de Rua* is annually hosting the *Duelo de MCs Nacional* which is a free-style rap competition with representatives from several states in the country. What was local becomes national and an inspiration (and aspiration) for MCs all over the

country. The rapper Bárbara Sweet assures that, during her involvement with hip-hop culture in several regions of Brazil, she has noticed that many MCs dream about battling on the stage under the *viaduto*.⁹³ For instance, the rapper Biro Biro from Brasília, states that even before he started rapping, he would watch *Duelo de MCs* on *Youtube* and use MCs like Douglas Din as a reference so he could start rapping too. Biro Biro confesses that he never believed someday he would be able to participate in a *Duelo de MCs*'s edition. The *viaduto*, thus, become a goal and a milestone in a rapper's career.

The *viaduto* has become a symbol for much more than a bridge; "It is an extension of our backyard in our low-income homes, the living room where you hang out with your friends, the family that welcomes you to complement your well-being", says Renilson Ferreira in a Facebook comment.⁹⁴ This view of the *viaduto* is very connected to one of the features in hip-hop culture. According to Oliver (2006) hip-hop culture is "reinforced by lyrics and video images that tend to glorify life in the streets." Similarly, in Brazilian rap, singing about the "reality" is a main concern. If the streets are considered an extension of their own home, rapping about their reality, "their social and physical universe" means to rap about the streets, "the setting of all their pain, struggle, solidarity, and overcoming".⁹⁵ The rap/rock group Planet Hemp in two verses, resume this idea of how reality and streets are connected:

We do not own the truth but we know the streets very well,
Our realities are naked and raw.⁹⁶

By understanding the streets as a place of socialization, it is combined with a crucial characteristic of rap music. According to Pastor Ton, an MC of the gospel rap group *Rimas Proféticas* (Prophetic Rhymes), rap is a "social thing".⁹⁷ Rappers want to socialize their

ideas and thoughts, a rap lyric is not made to be exclusive to their own knowledge. Rappers want their message to be communicated with audience to speak for groups beyond themselves.⁹⁸ Burdick's focus was gospel rap, even though, this same logic prevails in secular Brazilian rap. As Monge MC stated during one of the *Duelo de Mcs* editions: "Alone you do not exchange knowledge, you get dumber"; hip-hop and the celebrations under the *viaduto* are considered as a means of receiving and spreading information and gaining knowledge.⁹⁹ MV Bill, an Afro-Brazilian rapper, named one of his albums "*Traficando Informação*". He used the verb "*tráfico*" (which is commonly used to refer to drug trafficking) but instead of trafficking drugs, he traffics information. In this sense, we assume MV Bill wants his ideas to be as popular as drugs are. Hip-Hop culture and rap music are means of communication, and the streets became a "metaphor for community, a means through which people articulate their sense of togetherness through a particular juxtaposition of music, identity and place."¹⁰⁰ The young artist and cultural organizer Kdu dos Anjos declared in a documentary about the *viaduto* that he was already a hip-hop person in the ghetto when he used to help his neighbor with construction and afterwards they all had a big Brazilian barbecue listening to James Brown.¹⁰¹ This mixture of understanding the reality, working for the community and celebrating with black music collaborates to the comprehension of hip-hop culture and socialization. Further, it assists the comprehension of the *viaduto* as an icon for the urban youth in Belo Horizonte.

The *viaduto* also stands for a place for arts and respect: "A conquered space in a very beautiful place so we can rhyme. A very good place where everybody respects each other." Says the Facebook user Isaías Nunes. Some other definitions such as "A magic

place”, “street culture, freedom and diversity”, “cultural explosion”, “a place where you feel FREE”, “undoubtedly, it transforms people”, “the heart of cultural expression in BH.”¹⁰² Other members of the community express awareness about the achievements and the challenges in this particular place: “It is a space conquered by all of those who appreciate cultural diversity. Multifaceted place, where people from all ages are reunited. Besides, it is a mark of resistance and occupation of public spaces” says Irany Alves on a Facebook evaluation.¹⁰³ Some reviews alert the government’s inattention: “Top notch! I was there during *carnaval* and it was great. The only flaw is that the government could be more attentive and treat our patrimony better” says Alan R. Amaro. Similarly, Luana Nonato states: “It is a horrible place with a strong smell of urine at some spots, but the population beautified the place creating very good alternative events, for sure it is the best place to go if you like rap.” Moreover, the symbology of the *viaduto* affects even who still didn’t have the opportunity of visiting: “Bro, I never had the opportunity of going, but when this day comes, it will be the best day of my life, I guarantee. Hip hop and union forever”, assures Thiago Rodrigues.¹⁰⁴

For the artists, the *viaduto* is the place where many of them had their first opportunity of discovering themselves as artists and also the first place they welcome their art. The rapper Bárbara Sweet states that between them, they call the *viaduto* “Mecca” as an allusion to the most sacred city for Muslims in Saudi Arabia. The MC Brisa de la Cordillera (also known as Brisa Flow) describes the *viaduto* as an oasis, a sanctuary and a symbol for cultural resistance. Douglas Din, one of the most famous names of Belo Horizonte rap, also started his career under the bridge. In a show at SESC Palladium, an important venue for the city,

Douglas Din declared that in the same week he got to know a fire gun, he also got to know Racionais MC's (one of the biggest and oldest rap groups in Brazil); then, he chose the rational path (*racional*, in Portuguese). In our interview, the rapper mentioned that if it was not for the *viaduto* and the *Duelo de MCs* he would be dead at this point; "I would be just a memory in my mother's memory", assures Din. From this context, Din describes the *viaduto* as the place that protects and connects who he is and who he wants to be:

The *viaduto* is a sacred soil and sacred ceiling. It's even more sacred because we are used to the soil, the road, the walk. But being safe from the sunburns and the rain is a very new thing. The *viaduto* is the bridge from the dreams to the reality, a shelter for our dreams, protecting them from all the difficulties and all our experiences with human disgrace.¹⁰⁵

Although the meaning of the *viaduto* goes way beyond the engineer Emilio Henrique Baumgart may have been imagined when he led the construction of this important bridge in Belo Horizonte, it is necessary to recognize the limitations of this transformation. According to the rapper Douglas Din, in general, the people from peripheries and low-income communities are still in such a hypnotizing routine that they do not take advantage of cultural activities downtown. He is not only talking about the culture produced under the *viaduto* but also some governmental initiatives such as the Campaign for Popularizing Theaters (*Campanha de Popularização do Teatro*, in Portuguese). He even mentions that there are some good concerts that his grandmother would love to go, but she does not even hear about them where she lives. Moreover, the *viaduto*, in the moments that is not occupied by the cultural agents and audience, it is still a place for resting and inactivity as described by Belo Horizonte City Hall.¹⁰⁶ It is important to contextualize that cultural movements such as the *Duelo de MCs* are still limited initiatives that are not enough to reach out to every

citizen of Belo Horizonte, nor even every low-income Afro-Brazilian in the city. Also, such initiatives are not enough to eradicate social and racial inequalities, but they are one step forward to improve racial relations, transform local businesses and politics.

3.2 Businesses

Viaduto Santa Tereza being frequently occupied by the *Duelo de MCs* provided an opportunity for businesses and professional growth. Hip hop is traditionally known for its four elements, however, Krs One posits that there are five more elements that integrate hip-hop culture: Beat Boxin, Street Fashion, Street Language, Street Knowledge and Street Entrepreneurialism.¹⁰⁷ Out of these elements, Street Entrepreneurialism is a valuable element to understand how hip hop can be emerge as a form of financially benefit the people who dedicate their lives to this culture. Therefore, I argue that *Duelo de MCs* has transformed that space into an occasion for local businesses; beyond being a place for socialization, the *viaduto* is also place of opportunities and networking.

Duelo de MCs started as a reunion of friends; about thirty people and then “the thing got bigger and bigger”, states Bárbara Sweet.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the *Duelo de MCs* became bigger and it also impelled general use of that place and one of the evidences is easily found on the internet. The *viaduto* has 249 comments on Google, it was evaluated by 935 people on Facebook, liked for about thirteen thousand times, checked in approximately forty thousand times (where it is classified as a bridge and also as arts and entertainment) and appears on yelp as Landmarks and Historical Building with twelve reviews.¹⁰⁹ The Facebook page classified as “bridge” is a not an official page, Facebook classifies it as unofficial and states

that “it was created because people on Facebook demonstrates interest in this place or business, It is not affiliated or endorsed by any person associated to the *Viaduto Santa Tereza*.”¹¹⁰ This is a proof that even though *Viaduto Santa Tereza* is nor an official business or spot for businesses, there is interest and attendance to that area which leads to consume. The audience under the *viaduto* creates a demand for the consumption of arts, clothing/accessories, foods and drinks.

Douglas Din, at first, saw his free-styling as a leisure, something he did for fun. However, in 2009, 2010 “it ended up becoming my profession, because I started making money out of it”. He shares that because of his rhymes, he could travel to many towns in the state with people paying for this travels, in a standard artist’s contract.¹¹¹ “I didn’t even have money to travel when I saw everything was paid off I was like ‘wow, cool!’.” The rapper that grew up “without perspectives” in a *favela* in Belo Horizonte, shares that, like anyone else, he wanted to grow, he wanted to be seen.¹¹² Nowadays, Din is a great reference of rap battles around the country, is recognized by his rapper career and also integrates a group called *Bala da Palavra* where he is the singer. Douglas Din was the big champion of the two first national freestyle competitions, *Duelo Nacional*, in 2012 and 2013. This photo was after the final battle of 2013, Din was carried by the audience after the victory.



FIGURE 7: Douglas Din being carried after national competition in 2013. ¹¹³

The rapper Barbara Sweet highlights the importance of that stage and that audience to the MC's formation. She argues that the experience of holding the microphone on the stage in front of the big crowd is a very valorous experience for the MC. Additionally, she believes that the duelo de MCs build her as a professional MC; she had the opportunity of comprehending the dimension of hip hop and the power of the word. She learned how to “deal with the audience, to feel the audience, control the situation.”¹¹⁴ Definitely, the rappers' performances impact the audience and the audience responds accordingly. The photo below captured the moment after one MC finished battling and handed the microphone to his opponent; the facial expressions and body language demonstrate how the audience can impact the rapper.



FIGURE 8: The audience reacts to the battle.¹¹⁵

As rap battles are very fast, the ability of thinking fast to respond the opponent was a great exercise for Bárbara's transformation: "That space transformed me, gave me self confidence, empowerment, and built me as a person and as a professional." Bárbara nowadays lives off her art and an MC and also an art educator; her involvement with the culture under the *viaduto* opened doors so she could leave a job at a shopping mall and pursue her artistic career.¹¹⁶

On the other hand, Thiago Monge (as known as Monge MC) asserts that if it was not for the *Duelo de MCs*, he would still be working with hip-hop culture. However, he ponders that his involvement with hip-hop culture under the *viaduto* resulted in faster and bigger achievements. Nowadays, he works as a rapper, art educator, producer and youtuber. Having his work with *Família de Rua* as "a reference, a portfolio, a *curriculum vitae*".

Monge highlights that his experiences under the *viaduto* contribute to the opportunity of getting to know other artists and cultural proposals in the city and other groups interested in promoting rap battle in peripheries. Monge emphasises that *Duelo de MCs* made possible for him to connect with people, not only people involved in hip-hop culture but the most diverse citizens of Belo Horizonte.¹¹⁷



FIGURE 9: Monge MC, the master of ceremony, during the *Duelo*, inciting the audience to clench fists.¹¹⁸

Connecting with people is also one of the reasons why the singer Brisa de la Cordillera considers the *Duelo de MCs* her “crib”, the place where she gave her first steps for her artistic career. The rapper, that nowadays live in São Paulo, highlights that there was a kind a solidary network among the artists: “a lot of people got to know each others’ works, and this became a kind of solidary and creative economy among us because as a result of this haring we started having an income.” According to the rapper, the opportunity of

moving to São Paulo in 2012 to amplify her professional horizons was only possible because of this networking under the *viaduto*. She explains that frequently participating of the *Duelo de MCs* editions was crucial to her artistic formation. Since 2011 she makes a living off her art only, and she assures that being in an event where the four elements of hip hop were present made her obtain more knowledge, and grow professionally.¹¹⁹

Inti Collio, Brisa's brother, starting going to the *Duelo de MCs* in 2007, when he was only about thirteen years old; his sister used to take him to it. Inti mentions that he owns a lot of who he is to hip-hop culture. In the streets, he learned values that build him as a citizen, a person and a professional. After he started battling, he gain visibility and had opportunities to travel to other states in Brazil earning paychecks. Nowadays, Inti studies Law at UFMG (a very disputed course in a highly prestigious public university), has a clothing line (focused on hip-hop culture), is an art educator and teaches about hip hop in presentations and workshops.¹²⁰ Although it is not his focus right now, he is also producing his EP. Inti is one great example of how hip-hop culture in public spaces in Belo Horizonte can transform peoples careers, affect their income and even start up new businesses. He confesses: "I don't know what kind of young man I would be if it wasn't for my involvement with hip-hop culture".¹²¹

Inti was not the first one who started selling articles or offering services for the hip hoppers in Belo Horizonte. In the first years of *Duelo*, the audience under the *viaduto* could schedule an appointment with Zaika dos Santos to braid their hair. Zaika started braiding hair in the 90s and one day, because of schedule conflicts, she decided to braid one of her client's hair during the *Duelo*; it gave her visibility and created a demand. After this, every

Friday evening, Zaika would be working during the *Duelo*. Besides that, Zaika also braided hair in other cultural events in public spaces in Belo Horizonte, coordinate workshops on afro hairdos, black conscience and black identity enhancement.¹²² Nowadays, Zaika integrates an art collective called Nok é Nagô, is the idealizer, coordinator, producer and educator at Saltosoundsystem, she is a singer, researcher and activist. She has already recorded singles, albums, a music video and she is always performing around the country carrying her experiences of a black woman making a living of her art in urban Brazil.¹²³

The *Família de Rua* has been commercializing t-shirts and hoodies online and also in every *Duelo de MCs* edition.¹²⁴ The collective's entrepreneurship goes beyond selling clothing articles; up to now, they have recorded three albums (*O Som que Vem das Ruas*, 2011; *O Som que Vem das Ruas Vol. 2*, 2016 and *Ontem, Hoje e Sempre*, 2016), one single (*Mestre sem Cerimônia*, 2012), one music video (*Mestre sem Cerimônia*, 2012), and four documentaries (*O Som que Vem das Ruas*, 2011; *Mestres do Viaduto*, directed by Ana Estrela and Bárbara Viggiano, 2012; *Duelo de MCs Nacional 2012*, in partnership with Oi Futuro; *Duelo de MCs Nacional 2013* in partnership with Acanga Filmes).¹²⁵ Besides that, they always update their YouTube channel with all the battles under the bridge and they have a new battle modality called “*Duelo na Tela*”, which is basically rap battles designed to be on YouTube only. The battles are under the *viaduto*, or the surrounded areas without an audience.

The commerce under the *viaduto* and the surrounded areas grew proportionally to the growth of the cultural movements in Belo Horizonte. Many artists used the place to sell their CDs and promote their music.¹²⁶ Further, the cultural effervescence under the *Viaduto*

Santa Tereza also created a demand for food and drinks. There, you can buy beer, wine, soda, hot dogs, pasta, burgers, *catuaba* and *açaí*.



FIGURE 10: Snack sale during the *Duelo de MCs*.¹²⁷

For the vendors, this means an extra income or even the only income in case of unemployment; selling products during these cultural events become an alternative to survive the struggle. Fernando Trindade, as known as Nandão is a very famous vendor; he sells *Catuçaí*, which is a mixture of *catuaba* and *açaí*. Since 2013, his alternative business is becoming more and more famous in the city. During *Carnaval* in 2018, I could see other people selling his product for him, which I believe it is a sign of expansion. His presence during cultural events in Belo Horizonte has become so iconic, that his *Catuçaí* became news in 2016, baptized by *Jornal o Tempo* (local newspaper) as “The *Carnaval* Drink”.¹²⁸

Although Nandão does not limit his business to the events under the *Viaduto*, he is often seen in events there. Specially if related to *Carnaval*, Afro-Brazilian culture and LGBT parties.¹²⁹

Besides street vendors, the culture under the *viaduto* contributed to the expansion of that place, creating a sort of “cultural hallway” at Aarão Reis Street. Establishments such as *Baixo Centro Cultural* (the former Nelson Bordello) can only keep their door open because that area is now a destination for the youth in Belo Horizonte. Other business initiative such as the *Teatro Espanca* is part of the cultural polo installed in that area.¹³⁰ Even the bars that were already there felt a positive change regarding to the cultural events under the bridge. The rapper Bárbara Sweet assures that the *viaduto* is economically more valorized now; according to her “for the bar owners, there is a before and after *Duelo de MCs* period. (...) After the *Duelo*, they remodeled the bar and the business became much more profitable.” She also shares that during her talks to the bar owners, they state that the business hours would change according to the *Duelo*’s hours.¹³¹

Having thousands of people attending to the *Viaduto Santa Tereza* gave visibility to the artists and made many of them choose hip hop as their career. These cultural occupations created demands that extrapolates the cultural purposes it had initially “the transformation is cultural, but it is also economic.”¹³² Being that, hip-hop culture under the *viaduto* transformed that space with all elements of hip-hop culture including Street Entrepreneurialism which provides opportunities for businesses and develop careers. In the next section, I explore how this cultural movement affects local politics and political participation.

3.3 Political Participation

As already mentioned, the *Duelo de MCs* is not only a rap battle, it is a hip-hop movement where you can see, listen and feel and take advantage of the nine elements of hip-hop culture. One of the element of hip hop is considered to be knowledge (street knowledge) and it is also present in this cultural movement.¹³³ According to the rapper Hot Apocalypse, every day he goes to the *Duelo* he learns something new and this is what makes him go back every time.¹³⁴ Another rapper, Vinição, shares that battling in the *Duelo* made him started to read books and watch movies in order to embody knowledge that eventually he would share with others. For him, the idea of exchanging knowledge has everything to do with being an MC.¹³⁵ Fabrício FBC, another well-known rapper in Belo Horizonte scene, uses an interesting analogy to associate knowledge and street life: “Street is the college for the MC. The *Duelo* is grad school. There are some people over here that are already doctors.” In hip-hop culture, many times the knowledge is associated to the streets and to the reality; in other words, understanding and debating social issues that construct these realities. Also, the notion of reality is directly related to citizenship because one starts seen himself not only as an individual, but also as someone who functions in society and occupies certain place in this society. *Duelo de MCs* is also the place to debate such ideas, FBC explains that “one thing is when a guy in suit and tie tell you about your rights and duties. Another thing is when a guy that looks like you tells you the same”.¹³⁶ Indeed, the *viaduto* becomes not only a place to create culture and businesses but also a place exercise politics.

One of the best moments to debate social and political issues in the *Duelo* is during the knowledge battles (*Duelo do Conhecimento*, in Portuguese). The themes are always

contemplating topics related to the urban youth.¹³⁷ In 2015, the Brazilian chamber of deputies were about to vote for a law that would reduce the age of criminal responsibility from eighteen to sixteen years old.¹³⁸ Progressists in the country were critical to this measure specially because the prison system does not educate or recover offenders; charging sixteen-year-old and seventeen-year-old as adults would restrain them from recovering opportunities that are given to underage kids who commit a crime. On July 12th, 2015, the *Duelo de MCs* had a special edition and the theme would be this law that was still following legal channels in the congress. The *Viaduto Santa Tereza* became a place for political protest against this measure. There were protest signs “*Redução não é uma solução. Minas diz não*” (Reducing is not a solution, the state of Minas Gerais says no), chants and excellent rhymes in that afternoon welcoming a debate on the matter. Protesting against this Law alteration was an attempt to voice that community’s demand to a national level.



FIGURE 11: Sign “*Redução não é Solução*” during a *Duelo do Conhecimento*.¹³⁹

I highlighted some pieces of the impromptu poetry from that afternoon; we can notice that the MCs' arguments are on the same direction and they are completely articulated to what was being said in political debates about this matter. One of the arguments there are contrary to this measure is about the income distribution and it is contemplated in their lyrics:

Ignorants. You want to reduce the minimum age,
You should reduce the number of governors.
Douglas Din¹⁴⁰

I think the teacher should make more money
than the doctor, than the soccer player
Because he is the one who teaches and this I valorize.
Vinicin¹⁴¹

The first verses by Douglas Din express one current debate on Brazil: The Political Reform; one of the reasons why this reform is important is due to the number of politicians being maintained with high salaries plus benefits.¹⁴² Vinicin's verses contemplate the population's dissatisfaction with how much teachers make comparing to other professions. Another argument against the age reduction for criminal responsibilities is related to social and racial inequalities in Brazil, less fortunate underage kids have less opportunities, because of this, many times they turn to crime to fulfill their needs. Moreover, the verses below endorse the belief that prison will not educate these kids, that they will come out in a worse situation than they were before being arrested:

They want money at the expense of my underage kids
I want a better-quality school (...)
In jail, there will be always a teacher
Who teaches how to rob, who teaches how to kill
We have to re-educate the government (...)
Chris¹⁴³

Furthermore, in a country where racism is still institutional and present at the time a character will be judged, the rappers Chris and Clara Lima bring to attention the fact that, sometimes, your color and your origins already condemn you to harsher penalties.

You say the thing is ugly
 The thing is ugly for whom is black and poor
 And for the *favelados* who are already locked up in the ghetto.
 Chris¹⁴⁴

The young boy from *favelas* is always repressed
 Even if he is a hard worker, he is considered a criminal.
 Clara Lima¹⁴⁵

The following verses question the rights and duties of a sixteen-year-old and a seventeen-year-old in Brazilian society. It is still hard to find a formal job if you are underage, you cannot travel without supervision and you cannot get a driver's license. Controversially, the law wants to punish them as adults even though they are not given adults' rights.

Why can't he (the underage kid) get registered at CLT?
 Or travel abroad? Or get a driver's license?
 Dickson¹⁴⁶

If there is more education and more opportunities,
 For sure someone will be wiser to get a job (...)
 Samora¹⁴⁷

As I concluded in the first chapter, hip hop is a tool to report racial and social inequalities as well as it is the culture to use art to political transformation and social change. The next verses endorse the idea that the solution for the underage kids involved in criminal activity is through culture, politics and education. Further, Chris brings to the own community the responsibility to promote the transformation.

They want to arrest the underage kids that are actually victims (...)
 Where will you put them if the prisons are overcrowded? (...)
 With culture, politics and education.
 This is the only way to the revolution.
 Lucas Rasta¹⁴⁸

They don't have living conditions, they don't have study
 Now you want to expect content from them? (...)
 In this knavery, I will put a stop on it
 I, you and everybody that is here together in this moment
 Because we are the movement
 Chris¹⁴⁹

Rapping about inequalities is not the only protest tool hip-hop culture has. Graffiti is present under the *viaduto*, the surrounded areas and also all over the city confronting the gray norm and promoting debates. By comparing the arts in the museums and graffiti, Glória Diógenes affirms that in the museums, there is a certain passivity, the art is protected from the audience and other artists. Street arts, on the other hand, “the interventions connect themselves with the body of the writers, in a kind of material and organic fusion”.¹⁵⁰ In the streets, the arts do not need the approval or validation of curators and the audience gets free and democratic access.¹⁵¹ Marginalized groups in Brazilian society then may feel much more comfortable by performing and attending to arts on the streets; this attendance creates a “citizenship feeling” where the goal is to provide each individual the opportunity to recognize themselves and their experience.¹⁵² The artist Spunk is one example of how engaged art can be performed on the walls of Belo Horizonte. Spunk has been exercising his citizenship feeling by painting about racial and social inequalities.



FIGURE 12: Grafitti: shirtless and barefoot black child.

FIGURE 13: Grafitti: “So the blind can see.”¹⁵³

These are recent graffities; the first one is from 2017 and the second one 2018. The first one shows a shirtless and barefoot black child. In an allusion to the Instagram design, this child has zero likes (represented by the heart), no food and no family. The second art is called “#ParaCegoVer” (So the blind can see); it features two police officers arresting a young black man. One of the policemen has a pigmentocracy chart, which suggests they are arresting the boy because of his race. Even though these paintings were not made during the discussion about minimum age for criminal responsibility, they still dialogue with what was said that afternoon: they invite us to re-think racism, privileges and inequalities, consequently improving racial relations.

Another *Duelo do Conhecimento* edition demonstrated an interesting view of what the urban youth wants to transform in terms of politics. In 2012, they had as the theme “The City We Want” thus all the rhymes had to relate to this theme. The rapper Fabrício FBC starts battling:

It doesn't matter if you come to the Duelo and act like a smart guy
 Man, you gotta vote right
 So pay attention (...)
 Let's not mess up, let's take Márcio Lacerda down, (...)
 Let's revolutionize, put your hands in the air
 Let's vote for Monge, PDR, to be there (...)
 Vote for one crazy guy from the Duelo, vote for me!
 I will put skate ramps all over the city, free from Monday to Friday (...)
 Pay attention: On Sundays, no one will pay bus fare anymore.¹⁵⁴

In this piece, FBC draws attention to the political participation through voting and expresses his wishes of having public transportation without paying for the expensive fares. The rapper suggests transformation by electing someone from that movement, including himself. Moreover, FBC's verses indicates the wish of being in power or having someone like him in power, occupying a political position in order to bring the changes that audience (himself included) needs. It took a while, but in 2016, during the elections, he could see steps towards the city he wanted: Belo Horizonte elected Áurea Carolina, a black female hip hopper.

Áurea Carolina was the most voted city counselor elected in 2016 and the candidate with higher number of votes in history of Belo Horizonte.¹⁵⁵ The 34-year-old political scientist started being involved in hip-hop culture since 2000, when was a singer at a rap group and also integrated a hip-hop activism group called *O Hip Hop Chama*. Áurea believes that her involvement with hip-hop culture provoked a "profound transformation" in herself and it is connected to what she is today. According to Áurea, hip-hop culture has a strong political force specially because it propiciates the debate on public policies, access and rights.¹⁵⁶

Áurea's campaign was based on her activism for social minorities, one of the causes is to advocate for the black and poor youth and women's rights. During her campaign, she uploaded several videos on her YouTube channel showing people's support to her candidacy; among these people, members from *Família de Rua* and several rappers registered their thoughts about the importance and representability in electing Áurea.¹⁵⁷ It was the first time *Família de Rua* openly supported a politician.¹⁵⁸ Her campaign video is a rap about changes sung by twelve women (Paulinha Ituassu, Bárbara Sweet, Tamara Franklin, Kainná Tawá, Lauana Nara, Lana Black, Vivi Uaiss, Larissa Borges, Clara Lima, Walkiria Gabriele, Negra Lud and Polly Honorato), the images alternate from studio recording to some of these women walking at Aarão Reis Street, the street that connects *Praça da Estação* and the Central Station to the *Viaduto Santa Tereza*. Interestingly, they make the same path that people make in case they are going to the *viaduto* by train or bus (depending on the bus). The image below is a screenshot from the video and we can see Áurea walking in the direction of the *viaduto* while the song lyrics say "it is necessary to change".



FIGURE 14: Screenshot from Áurea Carolina's campaign video.¹⁵⁹

When questioned about the reason why she chose that location for the campaign video, she answers: “That area is part of my life, it materializes all my artistic self-discovery and political incidence. Also, it is a place that extrapolates hip-hop culture, it is the place of the relegated and unwanted city (...) But it is also the place of the potent city, the city that does not give in. (...) My candidacy has this origin of collective popular process, the ability of doing it ourselves and all this is strongly symbolized in this area”.¹⁶⁰ By electing Áurea Carolina, the “*baixo centro*” and these marginalized groups are occupying traditional ways of political participation, it is another step towards “the city we want”.

Áurea sees her historical victory as a “responsibility of not ignoring what we defend and straying strong no matter what happens regards to our purposes. It is also (the responsibility of defending the ones who trusted us.”¹⁶¹ Being compromised to work for human rights and minorities’ rights, one of the projects Áurea presented after being elected is concerning the city councilors’ salaries: she wants to reduce it by arguing it is incompatible with the salary received by other professions.¹⁶² This project contemplates some of the things Douglas Din and Vinicin rhymed about income distribution during the edition of *Duelo do Conhecimento* in 2015. Douglas Din questioned the number of politicians that are paid with taxes budget and Vinicin questioned why the teachers make less money than other jobs.¹⁶³ By proposing the reduction of councilors’ salaries, Áurea aims a change on income distribution and attends needs of some of the marginalized population in Belo Horizonte. Directly or indirectly, by electing Áurea Carolina, the *Duelo de MCs* and other cultural movements amplified their voices and started occupying a place beyond the streets: now there is representation in the city hall as well.

This chapter demonstrated that cultural initiatives such as *Duelo de MCs* are relevant and promote changes to the space, local businesses and politics. The *viaduto* and the surrounded areas that have always been repelled by the most fortunate members of the city and overlooked by governmental force, became a place that welcomed arts and diversity. As hip-hop culture is a culture of resistance to its core and motivated by political transformation, it was capable of mobilizing groups to transform that space; as stated by Áurea Carolina, a place of “multiple stories and trajectories” just like a public space should be.¹⁶⁴

4. CONCLUSION

This research explored how different approaches to race are related to musical genre and how hip hop can work as a tool for transformation. By using song lyrics and relating them to academic research; I analyzed how rap lyrics depict matters of race and racism. Burdick suggests that rap lyrics are more fundamental than the sound of the voice.¹⁶⁵ In this paper, I noticed that the majority of rap lyrics about race express concern about the matter, exhibiting existing racial relations and treating racial matters in a more politized way, through black empowerment, aiming on changes and social justice. Then I explored how hip hop is related to public space by presenting a case study in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the *Viaduto Santa Tereza*. Hip-hop culture was already born as a means of resistance by the racially and economically marginalized groups, the street, as a public space, has a strong meaning for hip-hop culture also because it is a more democratic and easier-access place than private spaces. Overall, I posited that the *viaduto* has been transformed mainly by hip-hop culture and this transformation affected local businesses and political participation in the city.

Viaduto Santa Tereza, a bridge initially designed to connect the *Santa Tereza/Floresta* neighborhoods to downtown, is a current and relevant example of how the marginalized can find scape in the streets, the bridge is currently the main reference for urban cultures and it became one of the most important cultural spots in the city. According to Cohen, places may “symbolize social relationships”, and the *viaduto* has become a symbol for relationships, affinity, protection, resistance, accessibility and opportunities.¹⁶⁶

Duelo de MCs is the most relevant cultural movement that takes place under the bridge; a movement that aims on celebrating hip-hop culture contemplating each of the nine elements of hip hop. *Família de Rua*, the collective that started promoting the *Duelo*, contributed to a community building not only through music, but also through visual and spatial arts; the *viaduto* became a place of encounters, a support system for young artists to develop their careers. Moreover, the events under the *viaduto* started attracting more and more audience creating a demand for commerce and giving visibility to the artists.¹⁶⁷ Further, the *Duelo de MCs* is also a place to practice citizenship, foment social debates and participate in political decisions

As Burdick states, even with all the improvements regarding race relations and affirmative actions in the past years, “it is too early to declare victory in the war against racism in Brazil.”¹⁶⁸ Contextualizing the transformation of the *viaduto* into a broader spectrum and evaluating the possible limitations of this transformation it is possible to conclude that such initiatives tend to improve racial relations in Brazil, they are still a small step towards social justice.

In conclusion, I believe that the resistance that serves as a fuel to build racial pride in song lyrics is the same that makes hip hop challenge traditional forms of occupation and transform spaces, lives and relations. Toni C. compares the act of using leftovers from the farmers’ market to make dinner to the duty of hip-hop culture. According to the author, hip-hop artists create culture with the leftovers, by transforming it and making it useful again.¹⁶⁹ Racial and social inequalities combined with the aspiration for change and transformation

are the main reasons why hip hop has transformed spaces and contributing to social mobility.

NOTES

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⁵ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1871), 1.

⁶ William Oliver. "An Alternative Black Male Socialization Institution," *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (July 2006): 921, <http://www.jstor.org.librarylink.uncc.edu/stable/pdf/40034352.pdf>.

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⁷ Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

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⁹ Photo: Casa Fora do Eixo

¹⁰ João Perdigão, *Viaduto Santa Tereza* (Belo Horizonte: Conceito, 2016).

¹¹ Livio Sansone, *Blackness Without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 62.

¹² Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 215.

¹³ Jerry Dávila. "Brazilian Race Relations: A Changing Context," *The Latin Americanist* 56.4 (2012): 1. accessed May 5, 2017 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1557-203X.2012.01174.x/abstract>.

¹⁴ Dávila, "Brazilian Race Relations," 1.

¹⁵ Dávila, "Brazilian Race Relations," 2.

¹⁶ Dávila, "Brazilian Race Relations," 3.

¹⁷ Áurea Carolina (city counselor, artist and activist), in interview with the author, February, 2018.

¹⁸ "Emicida falando a realidade no Altas Horas," video, 1:34, September 21, 2015, posted by "Videos Youtube," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJXwnTak1ZM>.

¹⁹ "A Carne," MP3 audio, Elza Soares, Maianga Discos, 2002.

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“A Mão da Limpeza,” Spotify, track 6 on Gilberto Gil, Raça Humana, Warner Music Brazil Ltda, 1984.

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Original line in Portuguese: “Sozinho você não troca conhecimento, você emburrece”.
Monge MC, 1:21

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Original line in Portuguese: “Eu já era uma pessoa do hip hop lá no gueto quando eu ajudava o vizinho a encher laje, depois tinha um churrascão ouvindo James Brown. Aquilo ali já era hip hop.” Kdu dos Anjos, 1:16:15.

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¹⁴⁰ Indie BH, “Duelo de MCs - Din vs Chris (1ª Fase) - Conhecimento - 12/07/15,” 6:10, July 23, 2015, posted by “Familiaderua,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjIIj_hx5s4.

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¹⁴² Mariana Desidério, “País ter 22 mil cargos políticos é um acinte, diz Falconi,” *Exame*, January 9, 2015, <https://exame.abril.com.br/brasil/pais-ter-22-mil-cargos-politicos-e-um-acinte-diz-falconi/>.

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¹⁴⁶ Indie BH, “Duelo de MCs - Samora vs Dickson (1ª Fase) - Conhecimento - 12/07/15,” 3:15, July 23, 2015, posted by “Familiaderua,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2dED9YxDnw>

“CLT” stands for *Consolidação das Leis de Trabalho*, which is the legislation that regulates formal employment in Brazil.

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