Reversal of fortunes?: São Paulo youth redirect urban development

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Abstract

This article addresses the relationship between space and investment in two forms of popular culture as part of an assessment of urban development in Brazil's largest city, São Paulo. Through a selected braiding of ethnographic reflections, urban histories, and social theories of speculation, I argue that the youth cultural practices of hip hop and "saraus" or open microphone talent shows have influenced the flows of investment and the social geography of expressive culture in São Paulo. Consequently, the value of the marginalized periphery ("periferia") has changed and with it the overall conceptualization of São Paulo.
Keywords: São Paulo, youth, popular culture, development, space

O Reverso da Fortuna?: a juventude paulistana redireciona o desenvolvimento urbano

Resumo

Este artigo aborda a relação entre espaço e investimento em duas formas de cultura popular como parte de uma avaliação do desenvolvimento em São Paulo. O texto entrelaça reflexões etnográficas, histórias urbanas, e teorias sociais de espoliação para argumentar que as práticas culturais juvenis de hip hop e saraus têm influenciado os fluxos de investimento e a geografia social da cultura expressiva em São Paulo. Consequentemente, o valor da periferia mudou e com ele a ideia geral da grande cidade.
Palavras-chaves: São Paulo, juventude, cultura popular, desenvolvimento, espaço

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In December of 2011 I embarked on what has become a traditional journey for me, a trip out to the little neighborhood called Jardim Bandeirantes located on a small jagged peninsula as part of the Billing Reservoir on the south east side of the mega-city São Paulo, Brazil. Named after the group of swashbuckling mercenaries, Euro-Indigenous creoles (caboclos) and Portuguese militia, who, starting in the sixteenth century, launched a campaign to "civilize" the interior backlands of this huge territory called Brazil, the Bandeirantes "Gardens" upholds its namesake as a conquest. Yet, this place exists not in the name of Christianity and the crown but as a campaign of simple homesteading. Constructed in a watershed area, Jardim Bandeirantes is a precarious and improvised settlement, one of thousands of illegal housing projects that make up the majority, i.e., the periphery of urban Brazil.

JB is also the home of my longtime consultant and veteran hip hop DJ Erry-G. We met at the neighborhood butcher, bought the fixings for lunch and began to settle in with the rhythm of street movement on a lazy, hot Sunday morning. Over the past decade our visits have occurred during periods of boom and bust as part of the rollercoaster ride of the rap music industry and the hip hop cultural circuit. On this particular day Erry-G was excited to talk about investments, both his personal purchases of DJ equipment, used laptops, Ortofon record turntable needles, and Serato Scratch software, as well as a recent spike in activity among what Erry-G called "alternative companies." Erry-G has invested virtually all his money, reputation and identity into hip hop. What is new is a sense of return, a surprising crest of speculation from the "system."

Over rice, beans and roasted chicken Erry-G reminded me of all the NGO work he had done. He recounted his years at Ação Educativa ("Educational Action"), an NGO located in the old center of São Paulo with a respected profile of outreach to peripheral neighborhoods and popular culture under the rubric of alternative education. We recalled the many workshops, concerts, and

debates he had helped organize from 2004 to 2009. He had generously included me in a couple of those debates. Good times. Erry-G paused and helped himself to another Fanta orange cola. "Yeah, that was a good experience…and it's not Ação Educativa's fault really but we all had to go there. We had to once again organize people to make the trek from their hood (quebrada) to get to downtown and all that. We had been through all this before when the hip hop posses first started in the early 90s [to be discussed in detail later in article text]. You know this. Then we brought the posses back to our neighborhoods, our side of the world. On the level of big organization of events and ongoing investment we needed a new circuit (circuito). This is why I am excited today. I feel things are turning around on a different level. Let me tell you about Catraca Livre ("Free Turnstile") and Suburbano Convicto ("Proud Suburbia"). After lunch we can check their sites. I think we'll find a plug for my upcoming event "From Percussion to Turntables" (Dos Tambores aos Toca-Discos)."

I had heard of these organizations before. The former is a project spearheaded in 2009 by internationally renowned educator and journalist Gilberto Dimenstein in the spirit of technological and cultural inclusion with the goal of creating a "web" or a "circuit" of information about cultural events in the São Paulo metro area[2]. The latter is a logo connected to bookstores, blogs, and underground film. "Proud Suburbia" is one "alternative company" connected to the "marginal literature" movement to be discussed in more detail below. As we chatted I finally understood Erry-G's emboldened spirit. The difference between these cultural enterprises and the hip hop posses, NGOs and cultural organizations of the past is that they were not simply about periphery life or located in the periphery but also creating new trajectories of particularly youth consumption of São Paulo culture. The peripheral circuits of open mic (sarau) on the south

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[2] For more on state initiatives by the Brazilian State to promote popular culture as a "web" see Pardue 2012.

side have become an option along with the traditional bourgeois cultural circuits of Pinheiros, Vila Madalena and Vila Olímpia. Satisfied from our midday feast, Erry-G ended lunch with a summary: "this is a new development. Hip hop may finally become evolved enough to really maintain itself as an industry without losing the roots of the periphery." Erry-G's final remarks were persuasive and provoked me to consider the role of space in the articulation and marketing of culture in the urban setting.

This article is an investigation into development from the standpoint of the margin. I focus less on the alternative companies mentioned above and more on the dynamics of space and agency in the emergence of new urban development. "Development" is a contested site in the mega-city of São Paulo where youth groups, who are engaged in popular cultural forms, such as hip hop and saraus or organized open microphone gatherings, have created a reevaluation of the city. This reevaluation has influenced certain practices of speculation as not only an economic risk venture but also a socio-spatial orientation. Ultimately, "pop speculation" is a perspective that puts the margin or periphery in the center of São Paulo and has affected a heterogeneous group of residents' sense of self and their attachment to place.

Introducing Development

"Development," of course, is a loaded term. Part of the polemic stems from the fact that "development" shares a great deal with "culture," in that both words are utilized to describe (empirical project or policy) and judge (notions of collective value). "Development" has had an intimate relationship with keywords of global reach such as "civilization" and "progress." It is assumed that "development" is a form of socio-economic "order" guided by universal reason and a rationality of efficiency and production. Indeed, Brazilian leaders in the late 19th century applied such a paradigm of thought as they engineered the transition from

Brazil as a monarchy to a republic. To this end, they designed a new flag to make the relationship explicit: "Order and Progress" (Ordem e Progresso).

Development takes on different contours when located in cities and rural areas. In the case of Brazil, historians, such as Brodwyn Fischer (2008), Nicolau Sevcenko (2003), and Teresa Meade (1997), have demonstrated that "development," as the undergirding principle behind the urban renewal of early twentieth century Rio de Janeiro, the national capital during most of the colonial period and post-independence up until 1960, was a violent process of displacement and disenfranchisement in the name of "culture" vis-à-vis European ideals of the modern city. Furthermore, similar to other places in the world, "development" has meant large-scale rural projects of corporate agro-business. And, similar to many places, development in the backlands, in the case of Brazil most visibly throughout the Amazon, has meant massacres and impunity. The recent, high-profile murders of Zé Cláudio and Maria do Espírito in 2011 as well as Sister Dorothy in 2005 speak to the dark side of development and, by extension, capitalism (Milanez 2011; Polastri and Rampazzo 2008).

"Development" as disenfranchisement, as displacement, as disingenuous law, constitutes one legacy, which contributes to the challenge of citizenship, a "poverty of rights" as Fischer describes, for the majority of Brazil's population today. Development is thus a semiotic circuitry, whose directional vectors are not simply conduits of people and capital but ultimately power and definitions of, in this case, the city. In these brief comments about urban and rural Brazil, we see that development is about a shaping of material and idea, i.e., a design of society.

For their part, anthropologists have offered an alternative interpretation of "development," i.e., a paradigm with which poor, working class groups have created bricolage economies using symbols of locality and globalization as well as tradition and

modernity as potential assets in small scale venture capitalism. Increasingly spectacular, such projects have resulted from waves of austerity or structural adjustment programs applied by international loan agencies in, for example, post-independence Africa and post-dictatorial Latin America. To a certain degree São Paulo hip hop and contemporary saraus are part of what the Comaroffs called a time of "occult economies" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1998) in that the value of hip hop and sarau participation / consumption signals a faith in a brighter future. Beyond a diminished music recording industry and a finicky clothing industry, hip hop sells experience of membership, a belief in the self through attitude and a commitment to the collective. While there are no suspicious confidence games per se, such as the alternative economies surrounding the visa lotteries in Lomé, Togo, as described by Piot (see also Ferguson 2006; Mains 2012), hip hop and sarau economies are relatively empty of substance or service in the conventional sense.

Speculation as a Spatial Negotiation

Hip hop's efficacy in selling identity is based on an "underlying asset," following Louis Bachelier, the early 20th century French mathematician and his theories of speculation. The external or irrational or social aspect of price, i.e., the "underlying asset," becomes a determining factor in value and helps shape the nebulous field of "derivative securities" (Davis and Etheridge 2006). In the case of hip hop, participants have created an underlying asset out of the conventionally appraised wastelands of the urban periphery, thereby changing certain speculation practices in relation to the overall value structure of the city.

Generally speaking, speculation is a practice of risk investment with little attention to infrastructure, history, or roots. Rather, it is an explicable moment of risk, a creative anxiety motivated by profit. Tirole defines it as a "forecasting" practice, based on the

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etymological root of "speculation" as a power of sight, that became increasingly important as financial markets became more "open" and less "complete." That is to say, commodity markets and stock trading, similar to employment and labor more generally, are "open" to repeated evaluation of potential returns as judgmental scrutiny focuses on "endogenous" or internal variables rather than solely macro-level factors of production, consumption and distribution (Tirole 1985).

Historically, anthropologists have approached questions of speculation through a discussion of finance institutions as socio-political and moral entities. Ultimately, these analyses have been interpretive exercises in the deconstruction of, for example, the activity of Wall Street investors and the ideology of capitalism as an evolutionary march towards greater production. A corollary to this view, which is most apropos to the notion of speculation, is that increased production and wealth accumulation periodically depend on "hedging" or a risk event that presents itself as part of the market itself. Addressing such issues, Karen Ho (2012) argues that contemporary speculation practices are decidedly myopic and actually curtail production by creating new risks and disassociating wealth from infrastructure investment.

Indeed, the literature in applied economics as well as the general use of the term warns us that "speculation" is a potentially skewing force that can lead to misplaced credit and underdevelopment of "real sector economic growth" (Grabel 1995; Murell 2002). Such warnings along with more descriptive analyses of speculation practices imply a sort of deviancy in speculation. As Tirole stated, "in this view, speculators are traders who bet on the opposite sides of the market because of their intrinsically divergent views of the world" (Tirole, 1985, p. 3).

In other words, speculation is marginal, a bet on the other side. With regard to the city, speculation requires an imagination of value on a moving target, an assumption about land values, futu-

re trends in commodities, and exchange rates in labor and information. Is it possible that hip hoppers such as Erry-G from the introductory vignette could become speculators or at least exert influence on the process of speculation in the reassessment of São Paulo's economic geography? My use of "speculation" is metaphorical and not technical.

Development and The City

In São Paulo and the rest of Latin America such an intervention into the reckoning of development and speculation requires a change in the attributes of the "periphery" (periferia) accompanied by a change in flows of publics as residents traverse the city. This article focuses on the city because the conjuncture of material and ideology in the process of development is most visible as urbanization. Urban development is both a public debate and a public forum.

The vibrant work of Brazilian scholars and public intellectuals, such as Nabil Bonduki (2011), Raquel Rolnik (1997) and Nicolau Sevcenko (1993), has been instrumental in tracing the marketing and real estate carrousel that constitutes urban development in São Paulo, without losing the strand of "utopianism" (Bonduki 2011), which is essential to urbanism. What these and other urban studies scholars and practitioners have pinpointed is the tension between the belief in the city and the right to the city. Rolnik and Sevcenko provide persuasive accounts of the financial connotations of belief and the rewards of risk in São Paulo during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The speculation of coffee barons on the global commerce market translated into a burgeoning real estate market as Brazilians began to believe in São Paulo as an engine of a new, "modern" Brazil. Similar to so many cities, São Paulo grew concretely according to the whims of commodity markets in a combination of industrial and real estate investment projects.

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Whether such development is a case of "sprawl," a series of unwanted land-use plans that lead to inefficiency and incoherence in the mechanics of urbanization and the sentiment of urbanism, is often difficult to measure (Ewing 1994). Be that as it may, the judgmental connotations of "sprawl" as it is with "development" necessarily intertwine with the discourses of "belief" and "rights" embedded in the beacon of modernity that is the city. In the case of São Paulo, the uneven, unwieldy city yawned toward the sky and hopscotched eastward from the "ground zero" of the Sé Cathedral through the neighborhoods of Brás to Mooca to Penha to Itaquera and later southward from Liberdade to Brooklin to Santo Amaro as municipal administrations surveyed myopically the relationship between industry and residence, transportation and sanitation, cultural monuments and educational infrastructure, respectively. The twentieth century was dominated by exclusionary commercial and residential development in the city center and improvisational housing development in the periphery (Holston 1991; Pardue 2010).

According to Bonduki (see also Fernandes 2007), the City Statute (Estatuto da Cidade) in 2001 and subsequent Strategic Plan of the Municipality of São Paulo, approved in 2002, were intended to reiterate modernist principles of social democracy, public investment and participatory planning. With its basis in the new federal constitution of 1988, the CS called for a return to conceiving of São Paulo in terms of the "social function of property" and the "right to live" (direito a habitação). These were high water marks of a progressive city mayor (Marta Suplicy of the Labor Party) and a gradual but general political turn to the left in Brazil.

The objectives of the CS only come into focus from a perspective of those whose belief in the city involves an attitude of self-confidence. Pop speculation is not simply a psychological or ideological challenge but also a spatial achievement. In the following I use the term "information," as articulated by local hip hoppers, to bring my claims about pop speculation into relief with empirical evidence.

Information as a Spatial Endeavor

As mentioned in the introduction, hip hoppers and sarau organizers invest in and propagate their worth often in terms of "information." Similarly, finance analysts have linked the act of speculation to an individual or firm's "belief that it has information" (Géczy, Minton and Schrand 2007). For anthropologist Piot the informal economy surrounding the visa lottery in Togo is more than marginal capitalist ingenuity, it is a product of a "conjuncture…of informationalism and its new technologies to produce a generative fantasy about exile and citizenship and global membership" (2010, p. 94). In the case of São Paulo hip hop, "information" and "idea exchange" are practices that involve imaginative exile in terms of data gathering expeditions but always with an eye on the local label of perifa, quebrada, and other colloquialisms for the periphery ways of life. Hip hop information is a method of "insurgent citizenship" (Holston 2008) under a belief that information is a means toward general recognition.

As mentioned above, until recently, São Paulo developed in a center-periphery model with the periphery as a massive series of bedroom communities, an abject depository of working classes, most of whom had migrated from the country's Northeast as Brazil's centers of production shifted from the old, plantation-centered economies to the industrial poles of the Southeast (São Paulo, Rio and Belo Horizonte), and the interior of the states of São Paulo and Minas after the decline of the coffee market. The value of the periphery was measured in its steady pool of labor for downtown development as well as a steady object for punditry on evil city ways, i.e., vices, crime, violence, illiteracy (Caldeira 2000). Such sentiments come through in stock phrases referring to periphery dwellers as gente sem cultura (people without culture) and gente que atrapalha o Brasil ser um pais desenvolvido (people who keep Brazil from becoming developed).

Whereas in Rio by the 1960s there was a growing recognition of at least a poetic value in the favelas and the morro (hillside slum) through samba music, São Paulo's periphery had nothing. Over time the Rio favela/morro has come to signify a range of concepts from the birthplace of Brazil's national music to child soldiers to breath-taking vistas in massive improvised housing developments, all of which have become commodities for investment in the industries of music recording, cinema, and tourism to name a few. It is a pop speculation that draws locally and globally and, for better or worse, contributes to the development of Rio, a development from below.

The semiotics of periphery in São Paulo have been a bit more challenging. Hip hop did not seem like a good bet a generation ago to create local meaning and redirect the vectors of development, as defined above. I arrived in Brazil at a moment when hip hop in all of its "elements" (rap, DJ, graffiti and street dance) was considered yankee mimicry. The mindset was that it would never be considered "Brazilian" and ultimately hip hop would be limited to a passing "fad" of rebellious marginal youth. Eager to make their case, hip hoppers impressed upon me that they knew what they were talking about. Whether it was about James Brown, Crazy Legs, Grandmaster Flash, Fela Kuti, Ghanian griots, or Brazilian soul star Tim Maia they were "informed." DJ Marquinhos told me: "Hip hop is evolving; it is developing. What is key is information." In retrospect, I realized that many of my early conversations with hip hoppers were not just about "knowledge" in an abstract sense, but knowledge in a processual, embodied, traveling way. In other words, knowledge was conceived of as a circuit. Information was and continues to be, despite the incorporation of social media into daily life, a socio-geographical practice.

The example of Mister Bronx is instructive of a perspective that defines information as necessarily located in space and dependent on social agency. Rapper, fanzine producer, blogger and veteran activist, Bronx grew up and continues to live in the neigh-

borhood Parque Santa Madalena on the east side of São Paulo, near the border with Santo André, an adjacent municipality. We first met each other in 1996 during a Yoruba language class held in the old Canhema cultural center in the municipality of Diadema, a space that is currently known as the Hip Hop Culture House (Casa de Cultura Hip Hop) to be discussed in detail below. We met again in 2007 at a hip hop event on the east side sponsored by CEDECA (Center of Defense for Children and Adolescents). We began to chat about a typical subject among hip hoppers, life as hectic or correria (literally the rush-rush), when Bronx began to reflect: "to be an informed guy, I had to get a better sense of place." Bronx continued:

> To be a hip hopper is all about information. The hecticness took me to a lot of new places and people. In this mad search, I ended up constructing a larger image of the city and a larger image of myself. I went on producing more and more stuff, fanzines, drawings, scraps, T-shirts, logos, all that kind of stuff to exchange with my people. I was really into it, just like everyone else in hip hop...Sometimes, we took over a place in downtown or in a city park somewhere...you know, you get really focused on what you're doing and how you're showing yourself in public. Of course, sometimes there are differences of opinion...I remember one time an elderly woman on the bus asked me what I was going to do with all this paper, these scraps [my fanzine at the time]. She tried to clarify...that I looked different, because I obviously was not a beggar or street person collecting paper. I think she initially took me for an office boy, a young black man, a typical role, no? someone a bit out of place...I told her that these papers were my magazine. 'Would you like a copy for the bus trip?'

 The fanzine, a popular medium of communication in the 1980s and 90s among hip hoppers, is an intentionally homemade product. Filled with various typographies ranging from the courier of newspaper to baroque cursive and gothic block lettering, photocopied at the corner stand in the center of Bronx's neighborhood, stapled, often in a seemingly random pattern, the fanzine is a curious kind of material culture. Its making and reproduction is a

farce of industrial capitalism because its aesthetic of a home made collage fragments the category of "magazine" and is a satire of formal art in terms of the ideal of modernist individualism.

Categories, whether material or social, emerge through standardization and reproduction. Discourse and the institution operate in a parallel fashion to define types of "office boy," "delinquent," as well as "Greco-Roman façade" and "magazine." The meaning of things is always a result of social relationships, which tend to reproduce the structural hegemony at a particular historical moment. The "margin" is not epiphenomenal to this process; rather, it is essential in the semiotic construction of precisely those things of categorical distinction.

At the moment of perception, the person, in this case the elderly woman on the bus, is in doubt. She does not recognize exactly the pile of paper in Bronx's lap. The presence of the fanzine created and continues to create, when it appears anachronistically, an opportunity of marginality in the terms of agency and intervention proposed in this article. As described above, Mister Bronx rises to the occasion when he articulates his stack of paper in a space seemingly out of place, out of pattern. Yet, his magazine practice was squarely within the parameters of São Paulo hip hop at the time. The paper pile, which conventionally represented trash or the manual labor of informal economies, gained another connotation in the occupation of a "center" or downtown space by the margin via the expression of a "marginal" Brazilian. The case of Mister Bronx demonstrates how the materiality of the margin (paper scraps, marginal youth from periphery) can, at times, actively (re)define the object (paper scraps), public transportation tangentially, and a place regularly classified as "center" and create new conventions.

On the surface, "information" appears to be a conventional substantive, a solid noun composed of reports, data and facts. This is certainly true and hip hoppers emphasize that "information"

is essential to knowledge and ultimately power. However, they also use the term as an activity to display their ability to "exchange ideas" (trocar uma idéia). Of course, we all are like this to some degree – i.e. we are what we know. However, in the case of the millions of shantytown residents around urban Brazil, identity is seemingly always represented as a lack of or tardiness in access to modernity and citizenship. If not expressed in terms of paucity, periferia identity normally signifies a set of negative attributes. As targets of daily prejudice within a social system deeply saturated in practices of racism, sexism, classism, and regional-based markers of status, periferia residents accumulate countless moments of dehumanizing experiences. As Brazilian sociologist Luiz Eduardo Soares (2002) has cogently argued, there is a "social invisibility" that shrouds Brazilian cities.

Identity formation and social organization have geographical implications in the form of new, recognized institutions and alternative flows of cultural consumption and people seeking out "information." Historically, hip hoppers became "socially visible" by organizing themselves in groups called posses and invest time in developing consciência. Hip hoppers explicitly associate "consciousness" to identity formation. In his description of the foundation of Posse Hausa, a hip hop organization located in the São Paulo industrial periphery city of São Bernardo do Campo, Nino Brown states: "the intention was to bring together more people, give support to the graffiti artists, the breakers, the rappers, all of whom could go there whenever and be able to say that they were from the Posse Hausa; they would have an identity."

The formation of posses, a grassroots style of hip hop organization, was fundamental for the establishment and longevity of Brazilian hip hop. In addition to providing support systems and networks for interested hip hop participants, posses were negotiating bodies, whose members lobbied for municipal and NGO aid. With city government agencies as problematic but functional assets, hip hoppers most often negotiated for space in the

form of a building to hold regular meetings, a neighborhood park to hold performance events, or wall space to create a public graffiti mural and provide "community education."

During most of the 1980s, hip hop claimed one space— metro station São Bento. At first, network expansion stayed close to the city center. Remaining in the old downtown area of Consolação near a strip of whore houses overlooking a historic Catholic cathedral, hip hoppers, now interested in integrating B-boy dance with rap and DJ performance, organized in the Roosevelt Plaza. The disseminating process of hip hop "information" rapidly increased, and the tone became more political and social and less oriented toward leisure. Hip hoppers often refer to this moment as the real beginning of hip hop as a "movement." By 1990 hip hoppers moved posse organizations to the periferia / periphery. Some important examples include Street Concepts (Conceitos de Rua) in Capão Redondo on the south side São Paulo and Black Alliance (Aliança Negra) and Active Force (Força Ativa) in Cidade Tiradentes on the east side São Paulo.

As we have seen, "information" is not solely an individual act of familiarization and recognition, but also a social engagement. Over time, the push for information helped justify the establishment of hip hop places as part of the physical cityscape of São Paulo. This is the case of the Hip Hop House known colloquially as the "Casa."

The Casa

When I arrived at the Cultural Center in Canhema, a neighborhood in the industrial satellite city of Diadema, in July of 1999 at the request of Nino Brown, there was something different and exciting going on. Local rappers, DJs, B-boys, B-girls, graffiti artists, and historians had joined forces with neighborhood politicians and journalists to persuade the Diadema Department of Culture to cede the government-run cultural center to an elec-

ted committee's management. Since then, the Canhema Cultural Center became the Hip Hop House (A Casa do Hip Hop).

The Casa quickly emerged as not only a meeting place in Diadema but also, more importantly in the long run, an institution of hip hop for youth to practice the "four elements" of hip hop and develop social networks. Every month the Casa holds an event called Hip Hop Em Açao (Hip Hop in Action), which features groups from the ongoing workshops, local "professional" artists representing all four elements, and a headlining rapper and DJ. By 2003, virtually all well-known rappers from the São Paulo area as well as many famous rappers and DJs from Rio, Brasília, Campinas, and Porto Alegre, had performed at the Casa. According to long-time DJ professor Erry-G and graffiti workshop instructor Tota, the "Hip Hop in Action" events serve to not only make the Casa more publicly visible but also "are learning experiences for everyone involved." Erry-G goes on to explain:

> We learn how to organize and publicize hip hop events. Perhaps most importantly, though, are the experiences of the local kids who wander in to the Casa and the kids who are just beginning in the workshops. Why? The "Hip Hop in Action" days are positive; the kids here in the neighborhood hear the music, see the dancing, the spray art, and then they see kids who look like them, some of whom they may recognize from around the way, and they see them doing something. They are up there next to Mano Brown, Rappin' Hood, Thaíde, DJ Hum, all the hip hop idols. They get interested. They come back. They sign up (for free) for the workshops and they get turned on to the history, the fun, the art, the idea of saying something, the power of expression, and they become more positive about themselves and where they come from. Sometimes they make new friends and that's also important. The beginners from the workshops learn what it means to perform... For many, just to get up on that stage is an achievement.

Simara was a local, round-the-way girl, who, in our conversations, remembered getting excited about going to the Casa and taking classes. Even though she stressed the importance of hip

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hop as something that had "always struck a chord in her," her stories and recollections quickly moved away from the individual and focused on the collective imaginary. She expressed that the Casa is a place of articulation, a place where

> youth receive information about their history, what it is to be a real citizen, and information about what's out there in the world. Because the Casa professors always try to work in "theory" (teoria), youth learn not just skills but also they get an education about language, history, time and rhythm, mathematics and division, and something about other places in the world—the path of hip hop.

Indeed, the "paths of hip hop," as exemplified in the dynamics of the Hip Hop House, provide a social cartography of alternative "development" in São Paulo in the 21st century. As Simara implied, the significance and value of the Casa is not simply an individual project of identity formation but a new implementation of landmarks. The Casa becomes part of a global hip hop circuit linked by a path of imagination and idea exchange. For motivated youth like Erry-G and others, the success of the Casa means that life in the periphery is not simply a rat race to try to find a way into the markets afar in conventional zones of commerce and education but there are legitimate institutions "here" in "our" space.

Saraus and the Flows of Cultural Investment

The idea of directionality as it relates to development and value is even more pronounced in the example of saraus. To convey the sentiment of these open microphone events I draw from Ferréz, a leading writer within the Brazilian "marginal literature" movement. He wrote "A girl in the capital of loneliness" as a preface to Érica Nascimento's published dissertation on the movement.

> She got tired of hearing: 'you are so smart, why don't you go work in a bank? Or 'you speak so well, why not get a job in the mall?...[Ferrez addresses the reader directly] Read

> this study by the girl, who in the capital of loneliness did not embrace the literature slurped from Europe…she saw in her peers a path, she saw in marginal literature created in the ghetto something more than speech, [she saw] life and much respect (Ferrez in Nascimento, 2009, p. 14-15).[3]

Saraus are a type of open mic event. Until recently, the sarau was considered either an elite, bourgeoisie past-time or a small, get--together in an intimate setting. Hardly a public event of interest beyond the few friends and family members of those involved, the sarau has changed significantly in purview and subsequently has altered the cultural map of São Paulo.

Over the past decade the sarau has become a regular event in various periphery locales and draws hundreds of people in attendance. The spaces are neither the swank performing halls of Citibank Hall nor the anonymous warehouse spaces in the industrial wasteland of São Paulo that change their name every night based on the music/art event. Rather, saraus are held in neighborhood bars, places that are commonplace landmarks to the relatively small group of residents who frequent the joints. For anyone from the periphery they are completely familiar, a quotidian mark of periphery life.

The element of periphery and margin has shaped the very essence of the contemporary sarau. In a workshop held in 2010 for popular educators and cultural performers, Sérgio Vaz, a leader in the sarau movement, described his purpose as one of "orality" (oralidade). "I grew up with nothing on the south side of São Paulo, a migrant from the northern region of Minas Gerais [a neighboring state to São Paulo state]. I always loved books but I realized that books are nothing without someone using them. It's about use. It's about participation. Ultimately, my notion of sarau is that it is for who doesn't exist, not for those who exist." Vaz's motto, é pra quem não é, não pra quem é, is an assertion

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[3] Translation by author.

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of agency for the condition Soares, cited above, termed "socially invisibility." In a follow-up interview after the talk, Vaz explained to me that sarau is part of the movement sem palco, a movement of those without a stage. "The general idea of the artist is to leave the perifa and go find the stage. I'm against that." For Brazilians, "sem palco" is an obvious association of the saraus to the popular movements of the landless (Movimento Sem Terra) and homeless (Movimento Sem Teto) throughout Brazil, both of whom have been instrumental in questioning the productivity of rural and urban development, respectively.

Saraus vary in terms of artistic form. While the original organizers, all of whom are from the respective neighborhoods where the saraus take place, orient the events towards poetry and spoken word performance, their saraus over time have accrued different styles and genres of expressive art. Some attract more musical participants, particularly traditional samba circles or samba de roda, while some are marked as more open to street theater. Prominent organizers such as Sérgio Vaz and Binho, while rivals in promoting their particular venues, work together to schedule their saraus on different days thereby making it possible for the aficionado and performer to participate in saraus throughout the periphery virtually every night.

What is striking about the sarau beyond the sheer numbers are the cross-sections of people involved. There are basically three types of sarau participants. It is important to note that due to the nature of the event and spatial layout of the bar, the line between performer and audience is ambiguous. While there are strict policies about respect, one finds a curious flow between spectator and performer, between sitting and acting, and between the gallery and the stage.

In this typology I highlight geography. Many of the sarau participants are the same folks who would be there on any other night. They frequent the bar regularly and are often excited that

a show is going on and that they can spit a rhyme or perform a tune or a scene to an audience beyond their extended family and friends. Another group are those that dedicate themselves to performance art. They are usually not from the particular neighborhood although many of them are from the periphery of São Paulo and share a general class position as those of the former group. Their identity is performance and they use the saraus to work on a craft. Performers such as Zinho Trindade, the great-grandson of the famous Afro-Brazilian poet Solano Trindade (1908-1974), fit this group.

I met Zinho in 2010 through his collaboration on projects with DJ Erry-G, the veteran DJ featured in the introduction of this article. We met several times, always in different circumstances - a folklore performance at a crafts fair, a downtown recording studio, the "Casa," Erry-G's improvised house precariously situated on a slope above one of the massive reservoirs on the south side of São Paulo, and, of course, at the saraus themselves. Zinho prides himself on being someone who is able to adapt to his surroundings and insert a bit of his style into whatever is around him.

> I am a chameleon in a sense but I never lose myself. I am proud of being part of the Trindade family and the Afro--Brazilian traditions of song and poetry we are part of. What is amazing about the saraus is that there is incredible idea exchange but also a chance to shine with your particular style. Before people would have to be tuned in to the revolutionary side of Brazilian history to know something about Solano Trindade and his work against racism and poverty. Now his ideas and the style of spoken word, rap, all of that come together and it's more visible. And, it's cool. We get all kinds of people checking us out.

Zinho is referring in particular to his rendition of his great grandfather's poem "Tem gente com fome" (There are starving people). Probably Solano Trindade's most well known text, "fome" tells the story of migration, labor, desperation and determination principally through the literary tactic of repetition. In

his performances Zinho visibly enjoys taking the repeated phrase "tem gente com fome" as an opportunity to combine his wide array of vocal styles with his theatrical facial expressions. Figure one exemplifies Zinho's posture and attitude and it is this sort of performativity that attracts Fernando, Paula and other representatives of the third type to the sarau.

Unlike the first two "types," the third type is of a very different class background with a significantly different perspective on São Paulo geography. Fernando and Paula represent the growing number of formally educated, middle and upper class youth who have become fascinated with saraus as part of a larger category of periphery popular culture in São Paulo. Paula explained that "there are saraus and some of them show films on the sort of [makeshift] terrace above. There are nice, old ladies selling popcorn. The art is great, the people are excellent and I have actually made plans to join one group and do some spoken word. I feel a part of it, not just an observer." It was, in fact, due to Zinho during a brainstorming session in Erry-G's house in 2010 that I became aware of this other kind of sarau participant.

In addition to performers, saraus have attracted a number of undergraduate and graduate students interested in alternative popular and urban cultural expressions. I have not conducted surveys or a large number of interviews with this group. Based on informal conversations, it is evident that not everyone who slums it over to the Sarau da Cooperifa (a neologism combining "cooperative" with "periferia"), for example, becomes as involved as Paula or is engaged in a university research project. Certainly, some are simply voyeurs who see the saraus as another cool taste in the palette of pop flavors of the month. However, one aspect of the sarau that members of this third type do hold in common is the inter-urban travel and an emergent spatial knowledge of the city necessary to arrive in these out-of-the-way spots.

Assessing Marginal Speculation

The sarau is not just a local and occasional academic concern. Mainstream media have periodically highlighted the saraus of Binho and the "marginal" literature of Ferréz and Sérgio Vaz. More importantly, a growing number of grassroots and progressive state cultural entrepreneurs are investing in such "development." This is the point. Popular cultural performers in working-class areas of São Paulo have transformed not only their personal experiences but also local places into valuable assets worthy of state, NGO and private investment. The "movements" of hip hop, made manifest in the Hip Hop House, along with saraus, made manifest in the multiple hole-in-the-wall bars scattered about Southside São Paulo, offer a contrast to the architectural spectacles such as the Octávio Frias de Oliveira Bridge, the new postcard of urban infrastructure,[4] or the "cleansing" campaigns to "develop" the decadent downtown section, colloquially known as "crackolândia" ("crack land"), by abusing and incarcerating scores of homeless. The difference is not only in terms of material investment and political posturing, it is about a more directed attention at participatory planning of the urban cityscape.

Spearheaded by a heterogenous group of "marginal" voices in the urban hinterland, São Paulo is now a place of multiple vectors of institutional development and an engaged citizenship. In a similar vein as Miyazaki's ruminations on "hope" among scholars and non-academic actors with regard to global capitalism (2006), this article represents a reinvestment in "development" as a potentially more open field of civic engagement and reorientation of spatial and temporal knowledge. As David Harvey beckoned over a decade ago, we should remind ourselves that "it was the speculative passions and expectations of the capita-

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[4] A typical celebratory website of the bridge, which serves predominantly wealthy residents of Morumbi, clubbers going to Pinheiros and the service employees of both neighborhoods can be found here: http://eyesonbrazil.com/2009/05/06/octavio-frias-de-oliveira-bridge-sp/

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list…that bore the system along, taking it in new directions and into new spaces" (Harvey, 2000, p. 255). The spirit of risk in the case of periphery dwellers in São Paulo is existential rather than financial. It is a risk of the collective self vis-à-vis a reorientation of attention and recognition accompanied by an ever so slight redistribution of financial sponsorship.

I have attempted to braid the conceptual and geographical threads of information, identity and value as an alternative practice of speculation. While stigmas of laziness, irrational violence and backwardness continue to be reproduced in some editorial columns of São Paulo's newspapers and afternoon vigilante "investigative reporter" television programs, the last decade has seen a strong counter-narrative emerge, one in which discourses of periphery identity are foregrounded in the explicit naming of neighborhoods and new cultural and entertainment institutions. The buildings and personal experiences associated with the "Casa" and the sarau circuits are based in earlier identity--space connections by youth such as Mister Bronx.

One of the greatest achievements of hip hop in Brazil and elsewhere has been the cultivation of an attitude and a self-esteem that is social and spatial in nature. Mister Bronx's story exemplifies the idea that knowledge of one's surroundings can strengthen one's sense of self and one's notion of value. It is through popular culture that such reconfigurations of self worth become collective and thus reshape collective perspectives on place, for example, in the form of neighborhood pride and a general "periphery" or marginal pride.

In sum, I have argued that marginal art forms and practice compose a central element in the current speculative map of São Paulo as to where value lies. This reevaluation involves a prioritization of the "underlying asset" of the margin or the periphery in shaping urban development. This is done not through attracting multi-million dollar investments from multinational

corporations but rather through attracting local and distant city residents to reassess the periphery as a generative locus of style and trend that gives shape to what the city as a whole means.

It remains to be seen if hip hop or saraus will become just two more examples of capitalist fetishization of the other to be explored and exploited for profit. For the moment, the ownership of place and the primary negotiators of financial sponsorship are local folk with a sense of obligation to place. Location is in many ways the raison d'etre of both hip hop and sarau and this sort of proximity has until now prevented any significant speculative hedges from the outside. The contradictions of "selling out" the symbols of the "inside" of periphery life keep these movements as examples of development turned on its head in the name of public participation.

Figure 1 - Photo of Zinho Trindade by author, 2010.

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