

From the in / visibility of representation to the politics of belonging in networks of young associativism in the Luso-Brazilian suburbs

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Abstract

Hip-hop culture in São Paulo (Brazil) and Lisbon (Portugal) is characterized as a social practice that enables greater visibility and assists in identity formation amongst the younger residents of impoverished urban neighbourhoods, often young blacks. Here hip-hop helps to generate new understandings of self, it reduces social stigma, and as such, it provides an effective tool in the fight against racism and other forms of discrimination and exclusion.

This work proceeds in a multidisciplinary and transversal way, questioning how young people in São Paulo and Lisbon appropriate hip-hop culture in their collective actions, and inspiring critical reflection on issues of "belonging", "tradition" and "identity". This essay prioritizes identity narratives that are built through a self-reflexivity, which emerges in the clash with the public space. It expounds on the importance of identity narratives in the processes of (re)construction and (re)signification in the composition of social actors' identities. Following Latour (2001), this article seeks to demonstrate that traditions are dynamic, that constructions have their own historicity, and, as affirmed by Sansi (2009:142), "syncretism is nothing other than history".

The methodology used to complete this work included a systematic review of relevant literature from the theoretical and political contribution of Cultural Studies and its focus on the process of cultural significance, present in the contemporary urban scene, which enables the creation of new narratives, not unilinear perspective, but open to different understandings. Young people are using hip-hop culture to reach and teach their communities about social justice and taking action.

My aim was to instigate innovative approaches and experimental learning between cultures and ideologies, the hip-hop being one of the most powerful tools of democratic practices of political expressiveness.

I considered the semi-structured interviews as an ideal instrument given their capacity for facilitating dialogue and learning, and the possibility of also showing the semantic fields in which speech is inserted. I used a recorder to better capture the speech transcription of the interviewees. Interviews were conducted with isolated individuals targeting the individual subject.

Keywords: Youth; Hip-Hop; Culture Studies; Communication; Social Media; Identity

Every day young peripherals from large urban centres appear in the mainstream media, usually linked to actions of rebellion and violence, relations with gangs and drug traffickers, often as victims of such actions, as well as prosecutors. The *hip-hoppers* try to fight the historic structure of devaluation of the periphery and its uniform characterisation. The association between youth and disorder originated in the work of the Chicago School in the early twentieth century, from studies on the violent clashes between gangs, groups and clandestine organizations formed by young immigrants in large American urban centres during the process of industrialization (Zaluar, 1998). This transitional understanding of the juvenile condition was

guided by functionalist formulations that emerged in the affluent societies of the postwar period. It is curious to notice that, under the influence of political and cultural frenzy caused by youth groups in the 1950s and 1960s, these approaches, though centered on the issue of reproduction of social order, allowed to put the youth as agents of novelty and change, establishing their role in the transmission process of cultural heritage, the modernization and rejuvenation of the society (Abramo, 1994).

We are living the age of emergence of "another thought" from the Cultural Studies' point of view[1], a thought that points to a post-Western or subaltern reason, striving as it is, to assert historically subordinated knowledge. In this way, historicity and transformative dynamism is best captured through the view of the subject as protagonist (Mignolo, 1996; Gilroy, 2001; Hall, 2003). We are at an exciting stage, wherein many long-dominant and universal worldviews, may be fundamentally questioned.

Subcultures of collectives linked to hip-hop have creative ways to claim social recognition and resistance to established standards, as well as innovative forms of integration in the spheres of social life. Given their strong presence in contemporary societies, they may contribute decisively to the production and renewal of the repertoire of values and social practices.

Considerations on identities and difference in contemporaneity

The idea, conceptually controlled, that young people are an "issue" and that they should be protected by policies of prevention and control, is still active in programs and projects, whether governmental or not. This type of conservative thinking dominates today and deserves even more critical attention (Dagnino, Evelina, Escobar, Arturo, Alavarez, 2000; Sposito, Marilia, 2003; Zaluar, Alba, 2008). The youth is represented by static models, homogenizers that reducing behaviors, habits, beliefs and values. Such models are permeated by a hegemonic grading system that cancels the cultural specifics of the plural subgroups and subcultures that form this phase of life.

In claiming visibility, they also claim the appreciation of the status quo because it is through this that they can add their concerns to the public agenda, highlighting speeches about their needs and differences. For Rua (2001), a youth public policy should provide a global response to the diverse needs of young people, improving their quality of life and seeking their maximum participation in decisions. So what is at stake when the State "thinks" certain actions specifically directed to youth? What are the criteria that lead a manager to make that decision - not another - in certain political and socio-cultural contexts? In this sense, from the hip-hop groups' contribution, we seek to broaden the discussion and add new insights, theoretical and practical, to reflections on peripheral youth policies.

Hip-hop culture emerged in the ghettos of New York, in the United States of America, in the 1970s. It is a

collective undertaking, and embraces artistic manifestations in the fields of music (rap, abbreviation of rhythm and poetry, a kind of spoken chant or rhythmic speech), visual arts (graffiti), dance (break), dj (disc-jockey) and the fifth element that would be the engagement of the use of hip-hop culture in local public policy. By occupying the public space with their artistic expressions, these subjects inflect the centre-suburb relationship, bringing the power relations implicit on these polarity up. This circumscribes not only the occupation of urban space but implies differential access to the material and symbolic goods (Martins, 2005). By claiming their integration, they illuminate other mechanisms and channels that are legitimated by the social processes that come from the community. According De Bordenave (1983), participation facilitates the growth of critical awareness of the population, strengthens their power to claim and prepares civil society to acquire more power in society.

In this way, the performance of peripheral young inside of the hip-hop culture is guided around a WE built feeling or by sharing a same social categorization (young belonging to big cities suburbs, majority Black or Mestizo) and, or by establish a collective project to their future and to the society as a whole (Melucci, 1996). The collective identity, on these terms, also establishes a conflict with an adversary, a THEY, politicizing, that way, social fights spaces to transformation of the relations of oppression in principles of justice and solidarity. The struggle for social recognition is a potential debate nowadays, and groups that are called minorities now claim the right to be free to choose their own social identity, not accepting imposed identities rooted of prejudices and social stigmas. The lead role of young people, residents of the suburbs of large urban centres, around the actions in the search for recognition in the sphere of social esteem, as defined by Axel Honneth (1996)¹, as well as self-realization and mutual encouragement of individuality, runs through some of the topics that we intend to discuss in an attempt to propose an understanding of what kind of social recognition is sought by youth associations linked to hip-hop.

Young people, from their insertions and participation to associations linked to hip-hop style, recognize, make sense of and seek different solutions to problems that they face in their daily routine that allow for the initial constitution of the "I". By combating social exclusion and urban violence through actions and procedures for training young people in the use of hip-hop culture, these groups define a collective project, in which problems are shared and a collective search for solutions is discussed, with the intention to publicize such conditions, in dialogue with other social and/or institutional agents. The information generated by these groups of young people takes qualitative features such as knowledge generation, and it assists in processes of social change.

These associations provide young people with new peripheral role models; acquisition of fresh knowledge

¹ Axel Honneth calls recognition the mutual relationship between individuals which presents itself from the autonomy of each one, taking into account the relevance of aspects of the uniqueness of each individual to social innovation. According to the author, individual self-actualization is only achieved when there is, in the experience of love, the possibility of self-confidence, in the experience of law, self-respect and, in the experience of solidarity, self-esteem. The key to this perspective is, therefore, the understanding of identity as a possibility for self-realization. Honneth, 1996, *passim*.

and social leadership, as well as new areas of belonging influence. Reading from these youth groups implement actions that help to contribute to the possibility of citizenship construction regarding their differences and rights. We believe that young people cannot be beneficiaries of policies and development programs, should public policies to youth be implemented and sustained in participative models that consider the youth as plural subjects.

The engagement of these groups is understood within the social care and education as "[...] the acting creative, constructive and supportive of the young, in the solution of problems in the community and broader social life" (Da Costa, 2000: 22).

Thus, the involvement of young people in social organizations and their growing influence in the definition of public policies show evidence that they are part of the solution to problems.

Constructing and deconstructing "identities" – Associação Posse Hausa

"HIP HOP with racial responsibility"

Posse Hausa

"*Posse*" ["Possession"] is defined as collective groups that are organised locally in neighbourhoods or regions in order to rescue the local youth's self-esteem and promote political awareness. In *posses*, marginalised groups become authors and actors of their realities, an actuation that goes beyond discussions. They seek knowledge through training workshops, book readings and experiencing reality as it is; they hold a critical sense, building a counter-hegemonic discourse in society.

Hip-hop causes people to be seen as citizens because they understand the laws and obtain more space because of the formation of citizenship [...] *posse* is not a feeling, but a movement, social we can say, for it is through culture and the understanding of history that we make our personal growth be achieved and, therefore, take possession of history and truth]. (Martins, 2012, pers. comm., 06 January)²

Being a hip-hopper in Posse Hausa means having responsibility for a political and cultural movement that serves as an instrument of action in communities, both for entertainment and social change; it is a duty to use the five elements of this movement in order to change people's lives. Being a hip-hopper is talking about one's own life, and feelings, expressing in one's particular way

² Mateus Martins, 37, a member of Posse Hausa, is a DJ and designer. He lives in Jardim Silvína district, São Bernardo do Campo, in the state of São Paulo.

how one sees the world around him or her. (Oadq, interviewed by Santos, 2007)³

Therefore, the importance of a collectivity such as a "*posse*" is that it makes evident a "we" which is needed for the constitution of each individual human being, a process that bears witness to the fact that individual lives are formed not only within institutional bureaucratic structures, but mainly from the outside, that is, from international arenas, public arenas of dialogue in which individuals talking to others update their criticisms to the world, creating another logic outside of social normality.

In operation since 26 June, 1993, Posse Hausa⁴ is a non-profit civil entity made up of youths linked to hip-hop culture in São Bernardo do Campo, a city within the São Paulo metropolitan region. The formal recognition of the group is seen as a positive step towards political incorporation in decision-making processes in the local community – as it allows for a more effective form of representation and political and social pressure.

Posse Hausa has been stimulating partnerships, local dialogue and solidarity among different social sectors by participating in activities that further common interests. It does this in partnership with public agencies and civil organisations. Hausa, whose headquarters are provisionally located at the residence of a member of the group, has survived largely through the efforts of its own members, often relying on the donations from the members themselves, as a large proportion of them have paid employment which is generally stable.

[...] we have our stable jobs and do something to improve the society in which we operate because we are a black majority that participates in this movement, being the most effected by discrimination because we are poor, black and from the periphery. (Martins, 2012, pers. comm., 06 January)

Organising oneself through a *posse* means establishing a familiar link of solidarity with other members through values that aim to improve the members' living conditions. The local youth identify with hip-hop culture and find an alternative expression as a form of protest against social injustice that effects them directly. The actuation of Posse Hausa characterises itself through the participation of youths who serve as art educators, propagating citizenship through the five elements of hip-hop and becoming imbued with the public spirit for egalitarian political relations and for a social structure based on collaboration.

The highest degree of participation is self-management, through which the group determines its goals, chooses its means and establishes the relevant controls, with no reference to any external authority. In

³ Honéré Al-amin Oadq is a member of the Posse Hausa Association in São Paulo, Brazil.

⁴ This youth organisation emerged after discussion with the city of São Bernardo do Campo, in which young people demanded support for a downtown skate park. The name refers to the West African Hausa ethnic group concentrated in Nigeria. During the slave period of Brazil, many Hausa people were taken to the city of Salvador in Bahia. In 1935 they were the actors of the Revolt of *Malés*, which was an upheaval of social character. During the revolt, slaves from certain ethnic groups which followed Islam, such as the Hausa, Igbomina and Picapó, organised themselves around radical proposals in order to release all other Muslim slaves. "Malé" is the term that was used to refer to Muslim slaves. Cf. Santos, 2010.

self-management the difference between managers and managed individuals disappears, since it is an example of self-government, with non-bureaucratic and even informal structures and with collective forms of decision-making, practiced with a certain, relatively small social distance between leaders and other participants (Melucci, 1996).

With the aim of spreading hip-hop and Afro-Brazilian culture, the Associação Posse Hausa actively participates in national and international forums, either as speakers, listeners or rappers. Posse Hausa provides educative, social and cultural activities, holding conferences, seminars, training courses, and lectures on themes related to the environment, gender, race, class, and about the nature of racism and its discriminatory and prejudiced manifestations. The main flags of Posse Hausa are the expansion of hip-hop in the streets where it was born, promoting the struggle against racism, fighting the genocide of marginalised black youths, and all forms of exclusion, together with the fight for black women's rights. Another feature is the ever-present war against drugs, seen as one of a major weapons used to exterminate the marginalised black population.

Hip-hop, as a cultural manifestation associated with an African-diasporic origin, is linked to that space Paul Gilroy has called the "Black Atlantic". Through this concept, Gilroy (1995) confronted common attitudes held amongst those concerned with the black condition, arguing convincingly against the narratives of nationalist and romantic inspiration that see Africa as the origin of a pure black culture. With the metaphor of the "Black Atlantic" Gilroy refers to the feeling of deterritorialisation of culture as opposed to the idea of a closed territorial culture, one that is also codified in the body, and seeks to explore the relationship among race, nation, nationality and ethnicity, in order to put into question the myth of ethnic identity and national unity; to think of new bases for black culture and identities, particularly emphasising the problems and limits of ethnic and racial identity. Gilroy demonstrates how African cultures in Africa and the diaspora have never lived sealed in themselves and can not be seen in a unidirectional field. He composes, rather, a space of deep cultural and identitarian exchanges.

Thus, by transgressing homogenising images, the members of Posse Hausa construct their notion of "blackness" and hip-hop under the key of interaction among communicative systems and contexts that they not only incorporate, but also modify and transcend; that is through the identification with common factors found in the history of African diaspora and with unique experiences of discrimination and segregation experienced by the components of the group in the local community. In this process, their ancestors' history of struggle and resistance is projected on the lived and resignified history.

The association participated in the creation of the Special Archive of African and African-American Cultures in partnership with the *Movimento Negro Unificado*⁵ at the Jardim Paineiras Library in Diadema (an industrial area of São Paulo's metropolitan part), which is the only reference for readers and researchers of the subject in the ABC region.⁶ This archive also emerges in the centre of discussions about public policy for black populations. Posse Hausa also participated in the routing of draft of bills, contributing to the successful passing of laws pertinent to the introduction of subjects related to Africa and the socioeconomic, political and cultural contributions of Afro-Brazilians in school curricula.

Among the works for the community which Posse Hausa has led, I highlight works done on the issue of race in education and culture, jointly with the *Movimento Negro Unificado* and the Department of Culture of São Bernardo do Campo; the participation in the organisation of the first parade of Peripheral Black Youth in São Bernardo do Campo, together with *Movimento Negro Unificado* and *Projeto Meninos e Meninas de Rua* [Project Street Boys and Girls]. Posse Hausa has also worked for the recovery of youths in *Febem*⁷ Tatuapé and has delivered lectures on AIDS and other STDs, as well as participating in other cultural events. And because of the significant political and cultural importance of hip-hop in São Paulo, Posse Hausa became the object of study of a master's thesis at the University of São Paulo by educator Elaine Nunes.

Education is fundamental for the group because it allows for access to knowledge, and new ways of reading history, playing a central role in this new construction of citizenship.

Hip-hop's political and social actions are performed through its fifth element: knowledge. Without the knowledge of rap, break and graffiti, they would not have this informative and conscientising character of social issues. Being a hip-hopper requires the pursuit of a knowledge that goes beyond what is taught in textbooks. (Santos, 2012, pers. comm., 09 January)⁸

Transformative, popular, critical education that establishes a dialogue with the reality of the subjects involved leads us to the ideals introduced by educator Paulo Freire,⁹ whose principles of popular education

⁵ MNU – *Movimento Negro Unificado* [Unified Black Movement] emerged on July 07, 1978, in a rally in front of the Municipal Theatre of São Paulo in protest against some local manifestations of racism. These protests were principally focused on the murder of Robson da Luz Silveira by police officers within the district of Guaianazes, and the segregation of black athletes by directors of the Tietê Rowing Club, who had prevented them from entering the club's pool.

⁶ The acronym ABC, in the region of the Great ABC, comes from the names of the three great cities that originally formed the region and have names of saints due to the Catholic influence in there, as follows: Santo André (A), São Bernardo do Campo (B) and São Caetano do Sul (C). The area is also often referred to with the acronym ABCD to include the city of Diadema.

⁷ The *Fundação Centro de Atendimento Socioeducativo ao Adolescente* (CASA) formerly called *Fundação Estadual para o Bem-estar do Menor* (FEBEM)], is a São Paulo institution linked to the State Ministry of Justice and Defence of Citizenship. Its function is to implement socio-educational juvenile justice measures as applied to young offenders (aged 12-21 years) in accordance with the state's Statute of Children and Adolescents. The establishment of CASA in 2007 allowed for the decommissioning of the *Complexo do Tatuapé* – a vast juvenile justice residential unit. Prior to that time, virtually all state care for young offenders across São Paulo state was concentrated in large units or complexes in the capital. These residential units brought together many young people, as an example at one stage the *Complexo do Tatuapé*, came to house 1,800 teenagers in 18 units.

⁸ Alexandre dos Santos, 26, is a student of librarian studies. He lives in São Bernardo do Campo where he is a member of Posse Hausa.

⁹ According to Vanilda Paiva (1986), educator and founder of the Critical Pedagogy movement, Paulo Freire is considered one of the most outstanding thinkers in the history of world pedagogy. For Paiva, the author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, advanced a dialogue with ordinary people, not only as a method, but as a way to be truly democratic.

are related to changing the oppressive reality, through the recognition, valorisation and emancipation of diverse individual and collective subjects. Participation in the production and transmission of messages, in the mechanisms of planning and management of the communal communication vehicle helps them to become *subjects*, protagonists of communication not only receivers. Created from social interactions, young social representations turn out to be, though, mediations between the subject and the world, interpenetrating feelings, ideas, biographies, ideologies, merging the stories of individuals with histories of nations, appropriated by the subject in order to give meaning to their actions and life.

The media, produced by organized sectors of the lower classes, or organically linked to them, eventually create a fertile field to citizenship and education development. In claiming to visibility, they also claim the appreciation of the status quo because it is through those they can add their concerns to the public agenda, highlighting speeches about their needs and differences. Awareness, practice and reflective practice form a category of organisation for popular education and are basic elements in social transformation.

The collective experience and social practice of the youths in Posse Hausa point to a significant and growing educative act in which community participation and the formulation of questions will ensure the political awareness of each component (Andrade, 1996). The increased expression by members propels the struggle for the production of new discourses, new truths and other forms of knowledge. Learning how to speak, give opinions and ask questions are attributes found in the social dynamics and practices of Posse Hausa.

Peripheral visions, participation and recognition – *Associação Diálogo e Acção/Zulu Nation Portugal*

In some of Lisbon's more downtrodden neighbourhoods, hip-hop has been serving as a tool for social integration and inclusion. One notes as a constant the insufficient infrastructure in these suburbs, resulting in degraded living conditions and daily existence. The images produced by the media establish differences and reinforce forms of classification by stigmatising social neighbourhoods as degraded spaces, publicly labelled as a zone of "non-right", to use a term forged by Loïc Wacquant (2001), marginalised and indifferent spaces, associated with concentrations of young black people linked to crime. This failure to recognise the other as a subject of interests and aspirations represents nothing more than a form of sociability that is not complete because it is governed by a logics of cancelling the other as an identity.

Discrimination from the outside allows identification with a place through neighbourhood associations or organised groups. Operating without a headquarters, and based provisionally in the rooms of a church in Reboleira – a neighbourhood in the Amadora municipality of the District of Lisbon - the *Associação Diálogo*

e Acção represents the *Zulu Nation*¹⁰ in Portugal. As such, the association gives support, guiding and defending the rights of youths and women, as well as immigrants that live in the neighbourhood's social housing. The association works through peaceful direct actions, that promote dialogue, citizenship, self-esteem and the valorisation of its members artistic potentials, thus enabling those involved to become cultural agents as mediators and multipliers of the message.

Through its actions, the association has been exercising what we would call the "decentring of the coloniser's gaze" from the argument that the individual builds his or her otherness from the moment he or she begins to question the coloniser's gaze upon him or her. The point behind this postcolonial look is the struggle, as Argentine theorist Walter Mignolo (2000) states, for a displacement of the locus of enunciation. The concern is relocation. It is not just to return the look, but try to change the source of the gaze, thus exercising pluritopic hermeneutics. Put another way, creating spaces of possibilities for the subaltern to independently forge his or her subjectivity.

Aiming at the expansion of social networks beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood, the association has participated in international hip-hop networks, seeking partnerships with other groups that share the same philosophy in order to enlarge the areas of intervention. In 2010, for instance, helped by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, *Diálogo e Acção* received support for the project *Hip-Hop de Batom*, which through the various aspects of hip-hop – singing, dancing, DJ-ing and graffiti – and in a distinctly masculine environment, intended to give space and voice to women and promote gender equality and the exercise of women's citizen rights, in order to decrease public and domestic violence that submits many women to constraints, discrimination, unequal opportunities for employment or throws them into prostitution, turning them victims of traffickers in the sex industry, amongst many other forms of aggression exercised against them.

The project *Hip-Hop de Batom [Hip-Hop with Lipstick]*, involved the development of a range of diverse activities aimed at the exchange of experiences among women. The project involved film and documentary exhibitions about the importance of women and hip-hop culture, expositions and live performances of particular appeal to women artists from peripheral urban areas. *Hip-Hop de Batom* also involved the participation of young women of in seminars on themes relating to violence against women. And as an outcome of a course for female rappers, song lyrics which talked about female genital mutilation were composed, and an illustration on the theme was made by the group's graffitist.

¹⁰ The *Universal Zulu Nation* (UZN) was founded by DJ Afrika Bambaataa in 1973. A former leader of the Black Spades, the most dangerous street gang in the Bronx, NYC, with *Universal Zulu Nation*, DJ Afrika Bambaataa brought together the many talents found in his native district, lest they lost themselves through the hostile environment of crime and drugs. A year after having gathered the main elements of the cultural ghetto (e.g. DJs, MCs, B-boys/girls and graffiti), Bambaataa, with the support of two other DJs, created the *Zulu Nation Hip-Hop Cultural Movement*, ruled by the 5th element of hip-hop, "Knowledge" – in which the proposal of comprehensive information to all, and respect for their supporters and sympathisers, regardless of creed, colour or race, was preached.

It is possible to open and create a frank communicational system through participative management and active citizenship, in which social relationships occur in a plain way, allowing all participants to be producers of meaning. The latter end up producing meaning on networks of informal interaction among an actors plurality, based on a shared collective identity (beliefs and orientations). These groupings list varied objectives, but often appear with the same purpose: the desire and need to solve common problems. Thus, communication aimed at social mobilization seeks to establish a relationship between those involved that is simultaneously dialogical, pedagogical and liberating. The communication is dialogic 'as long as it is not a knowledge transfer, but a congregation of interlocutors', individuals do not simply 'absorb supplied symbolic materials but interact with them, recognize their intra-polarities, interpret and react'.

Giving visibility to hip-hop women through the exhibition and presentation of their artwork also serves to give voice to the excluded women from social housing neighbourhoods, and to divulge and promote hip-hop women in the media. Further, the event showed the art of hip-hop also as a public expression of denouncing violence against women.

Hip-Hop for Peace is another project currently run by the *Associação Diálogo e Acção Zulu Nation Portugal*. The *Hip-Hop for Peace* project is aimed at personal and social development, working to integrate people and build citizenship through hip-hop as a vehicle of cultural information. The project integrates youths from the Lisbon neighbourhoods of Sta Filomena, Cruz Vermelha (Cascais), Amadora, Queluz, Sintra, Apelação (Loures), Quinta da Princesa (Seixal), Estoril, Chelas and Fim do Mundo. A total of twenty young people are involved in the promotion of actions for peace and non-violence. The project has strengthened the talents, qualities and competences of young people involved, thereby contributing to the process of social inclusion of these youths within their neighbourhoods.

On September 10th, 2011, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation hosted the CD-launch concert *Hip-Hop for Peace* in its outdoor amphitheatre. This CD-launch concert was aimed at promoting non-violence and dialogue to foster rhythmic and musical creativity in the context of social and cultural interaction and social inclusion.

I always want to be original and keep myself within a philosophy with reference to the *Zulu Nation*. Bringing home the initial ideology of hip-hop, the unification of peoples, peace! I want to warn everybody through information that people have no knowledge with words that can make us grow!. (Jack Pot., 2012, pers. comm., 17 January)¹¹

This is not a temporary whim, this is not a fashion, this is not a hobby. It is to seek, with our own gifts and abilities, to improve the world in the light of the

¹¹ Jack Pot, a rapper, is a member of *Zulu Nation Portugal*.

fifth element – which we designate as Knowledge. (Barros Mendes, 2011, pers. comm., 15 December)¹²

Underlying the willingness to participate is a civic sense, a social concern, a feeling of well-being by doing something that is positive for somebody else, including the group to which the activity is addressed. In this light, the simple fact of participating implies a strong appeal to create and experience different forms of everyday social relationships in the exercise of spaces of more sympathetic relationships, of a less market-driven awareness, less alienated cultural manifestations in response to various deficiencies of the social sphere that arise in the periphery of the system.

When you are participating in a group you feel more important even to yourself, both your self-esteem and the importance you give to yourself. I can practice what I like, what I know how to do. When you are in the group, when we unite, this makes us stronger. (Andrade, 2011, pers. comm., 20 November)¹³

One of the key terms used by these associations is youth leadership, which is reflected in the participation of youths in the contexts in which they are inserted in order to propose ways to achieve the condition of citizenship. In youth groups linked to hip-hop, social subjects communicate and become aware of their rights and duties. From that moment these young people make decisions about their lives, either individually or collectively. The identity of belonging is reinforced as a symbolic strategy of seeking inclusion in the face of contexts of fragmentation derived from gradually more intense processes of inequality.

Final considerations

The social and cultural participation / involvement of young peripherals movements through decisions that the state has been taking, especially in the area of social policy, contributes to the strengthening of civil society and favors forms of popular organization. This exemplifies positive possibilities for the relationship between citizenship and equality.

The investigation has a) considered how the members express the solutions to various conflicts in everyday life and, the various factors that influence the formation of established identities; b) identified projects and actions by Zulu Nation Portugal and Posse Hausa that systematize the implementation of actions aimed at a peripheral youth audience; c) examined how these relationships are established with the juvenile segments analyzed in this project; d) described and categorized actions which make use of hip-hop culture,

¹² Nicandro Francisco de Barros Mendes, 24, was born in Guinea-Bissau but later settled in Portugal, where he now lives in Cacém. Nicandro is a rapper, designer, communication and multimedia student, a part-time shopkeeper, and a member of the hip-hop collective *Zulu Nation Portugal*.

¹³ Cátia Andrade, known as MC Gata, 28, is Portuguese with Cape Verdean origins and lives in Zona M de Chelas, Lisbon. She is a member of *Zulu Nation Portugal* and a rapper in the group *Hip-Hop de Batom [Hip-Hop Wearing Lipstick]*.

particularly the idea of the collective, in order to configure a pivotal understanding from which action may emerge.

The research encourages discussion on issues relating to culture, education, use of hip-hop culture by civil peripheral youth, cultural policy, the affirmation of diversity, and spreading supportive and cooperative values. Thus, it seeks to overcome the problem of youthful ideas and young people being underrepresented in training, by representing the interests of the young in terms of rights of access to education, communication, health, social inclusion, employment, leisure time, social spaces and personal relationships. Above all, a conception of youth as subjects of the law prevails.

For these reasons, it has been observed that the actions of these groups consist in finding pro-active alternatives to facing up to local and global social problems; finding sustainable ways to improve these spaces that goes beyond the notion of development as economic and material progress.

Here a concern with identity emerges, both from groups and individuals inserted in this context. Reviewing one's identity, questioning one's identity, reaffirming one's identity become current demands. In short, belonging to a movement, a network, a political and ethical field, locating oneself in a discursive field, involves experiencing the challenge of otherness, entering into struggles for recognition or to redress injustices and inequalities.

The community media utilized by hip-hop groups in Brazil and Portugal, creates expanding opportunities that determine the self-representations of individuals collectives. Through the use of alternative media, such groups promote their ideas in order to expand their goals and reach towards others audiences and sectors. They do this with the objective to integrate, promote and achieve public recognition and legitimacy. It is possible to identify a variety of motivations that may underlie the stimulus felt by youths to take their first steps within these groups linked to hip-hop.

In this perspective of hybridity and multiterritoriality, transactions and dynamics between spaces and actors compete for what Bhabha (1994) shows in the *boundaries* as the place from which something begins to be present, being the "between-places", fringes, interstices, in short, the locus in which social relations are exercised. Cultural differences are exercised, engendering new spaces and temporalities, which implies a constant displacement, cancelling the categories of "center" and "periphery".

These motivations can be summarised as follows: symbolic and affective affinities compared to the activities to which one adheres; the need or desire to express oneself in terms of identity, in connection with cultural roots in Africa; access to training and/or employment opportunities, combining personal tastes; opportunity to meet people and socialise, interconnecting with bonds of friendship, family or community, with a strong weight of juvenile sociability; resolution of concrete problems that effect

individuals or the neighbourhoods where they live, combining the individual interest with a civic sense of contributing to the collective welfare.

This research is relevant in several aspects. From an academic point of view, it promotes a intercultural dialogue, where differences are dialectically integrated, guiding the construction of a democratic and pluralistic society. Taking the perspective of "MOBILE" TERRITORIES as culturally multifaceted and dynamic constructions (Canclini, 2004; Appadurai, 2004), there emerges the possibilities for interesting discussion over the clash between the reality of the contemporary world, whereby the logic of the nation state – which is based on areas and not in networks (Haesbaert, 2009) – does not combine with the new perspective of belonging. Thus, MULTITERRITORIALITIES has led broader discussions, seeking out civic associative *networks* and the different uses these organisations make of the hip-hop culture, in order to generate specific democratic effects, such as a) interpretation of interests and construction of plural identities; b) formation of the public sphere or c) political activism and institutional clashes.

As an ethnographic exercise, the set of reflections contained in this work constitutes an excellent reference framework for theoretical, practical and investigative studies about the theme by educators in the field.

The theme is particularly relevant given that it positively represents the possibility of exploring key aspects of otherness in the field of communication. It serves as a mechanism to foster affirmative actions, in order to engage in dialogue with new configurations of the contemporary world.

In summary, the reading taken from the actions and experiences of these groups implies strong possibilities for building citizenship by encouraging respect for differences and rights. The groupings of young people linked to hip-hop are, therefore, a key field of research for understanding and decoding the meanings and social roles that are attributed to youth. Their activities enable a permanent channel of dialogue between the government and civil society on issues concerning public policies addressed at marginalised youths. A fundamental characteristic of modern citizenship is the growing diversity of social actors with specific interests that strive for greater public participation, most often with different and even antagonistic emphases. Participation, geared towards improving circumstance is not always formalized institutionally and this can have good or bad outcomes. As a result, this paper espouses belief in the importance of supporting, strengthening and redesigning formal mechanisms for youths. It endorses the renovation and transformation of society in pursuit of greater equity and social justice.

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