

Counterhegemonic Beats

An analysis of popular culture's resistance in marginalised communities through the case study of Funk Carioca

Miguel Motta de Mello (703778)

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how popular culture from marginalised communities interplays with marginalisation in two manners: as a target and a resistance. It departs from theories of Black Geographies, Decoloniality and Urban Studies to frame the marginalisation process, its intricacies with capitalism and the territorial and cultural realities embedded. Then, it analyses the case study of Funk Carioca, a musical cultural movement that originated in the city of Rio de Janeiro, within the construction of the marginalised profile of the city. The dissertation concludes that the cultural experiences of these communities reshape their symbolic realities, but their material realities are still embedded in structural violence. Nevertheless, the empowerment of a black sense of place (McKittrick, 2011) and a decolonial identity serve to raise awareness of oppression, questioning hegemonic discourse.

*“All I want is to be happy, to walk peacefully in the favela where I was born
and to take pride having the consciousness that the poor has their place”*

Cidinho and Doca, *Rap da Felicidade* (1995) (Author’s translation)

1 Introduction

Social marginalisation and its dependency to capitalism and modernity have long attracted attention from social sciences, including decolonial, racial and urban scholarships (Escobar, 1982; Quijano, 2007; Robinson, 2000 [1983]; Wacquant, 2003; Harvey, 2003). In the Americas, slavery originated oppressions that connect African-diasporic communities and still prevail through a continuous renovation of social divisions (McKittrick, 2011). The control over these bodies and cultures serves to protect the submissive order, excluding these groups from the modernity and development projects (ibid.). Under neoliberalism, the ultramarginalisation of these groups via economic, political and symbolic violence has reshaped their relation with the state (Wacquant, 2003a). A 'war on poor', characteristic of the penalisation and militarisation of racialised territories, harshened their imagery as communities of violence and lack (ibid.). However, they resist with popular culture as a beacon of their strengths (Simas, 2019). In studying the marginalisation process through these manifestations, we explore the community's agency and how it decolonially counteracts the structural violences¹.

This dissertation will investigate how popular culture from marginalised communities interplays with marginalisation in two manners: as a target and a resistance. It will explore the case of *Funk Carioca*², a musical and cultural manifestation that originates from Rio de Janeiro favelas and suburbs³ and has spread as one of the most popular genres in Brazil. The musical genre is the first Brazilian electronic music genre, conjugating diasporic influences from Hip Hop and afro-brazilian traditions accompanied

¹ The concept of 'structural violence' includes "the violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion, and humiliation" (Fox, S., & Goodfellow, T., 2016, p.205).

² *Carioca* is the demonym for Rio de Janeiro. This musical genre is often referred to, internationally, as *Baile Funk* – referring to the party that hosts the movement. Throughout this paper, we will refer to it simply as *funk*, clearly pointing when we refer to the homonym US musical genre.

³ In Rio de Janeiro, the Suburbs (suburbio) have a particular connotation, an urban occupation that spread through the train tracks, where the (mostly racialised) lower classes found housing options and formed neighbourhoods away from the city centre (Simas, 2019; Moraes et al., 2022; Lopes, 2010).

by singing by an MC⁴ (Moutinho, 2020). Its territorial and historic origins are at *Baile Funks*, parties in marginalised territories featuring large sound systems.

Funk has become a symbol of the cultural and territorial identity of Rio de Janeiro's favelas (Facina, 2010) with a double significance. While it is an empowering cultural manifestation for its communities, it has also been shaped as a diminishing factor to the marginalised social profile. This duality portrays the significance of culture as a central arena for social clashes: the concomitant repression and resistance of funk represent the cultural aspect of a social war against the poor (Facina, 2009).

The cultural repression amounts to the structural violence that represses these communities. Police brutality against marginalised territories such as favelas follows a continuity from colonial slavery for state control of the dispossessed (McKittrick, 2011; Wacquant, 2008) and racist construction of marginality (Fernandez & Rodriguez, 2015). The criminal policy perpetrated by a police that executes the same social extract, age and race contemplates the extermination as a terror and control tactic over the victim social group (Batista, 1997). Added to that, 'infrastructural violence'⁵ is particularly important in cities (Fox and Goodfellow, 2016), spatially dividing the marginalised, limiting their possibilities, and withdrawing their right to the city (Harvey, 2003). The dehumanisation project of such violences maintains the oppressed as inferior, removing their agency, and precluding development, in Freire's (1972) terms.

Paulo Freire differentiates development from modernisation. The latter is based on coloniality, serving the metropolitan elites (1972). The former is based on removing the power asymmetries of oppressor-oppressed, breaking asymmetries, and collectively tying all beings with equal rights (Suzina and Tufte, 2020). For Freire (1972), if the political decision is concentrated in only a part of society, only this part will transform. Without representation, the urban marginal territories, besides their precariousness, tend

⁴ Master of Cerimonies.

⁵ On 'Infrastructural Violence', see Rodgers & O'Neill (2012).

to attract state and media attention only as a threat or place of violence that needs to be contained (Muggha, 2014). The development issues are then treated as security issues, not prioritising the vulnerable populations, but simply controlling the menace to the neoliberal culture (Marriage, 2019). This development project based on modernity depends on marginalising the racialised poor (Escobar, 1992).

Popular culture 'from below'⁶, however, offers a counterhegemonic discourse that challenges this dehumanisation and voices the reality of marginalised communities. Hence, this dissertation will explore the case of *Funk* in Rio de Janeiro to analyse the potential of this resistance.

This dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 will explore different theories on how urban and social marginalisation is central, and not incidental, to the capitalist development project. Chapter 3 is divided in two parts. First, it will briefly contextualise the construction of marginalities in the city, mentioning the experience of Samba in the early 20th-century. Then, it will describe the socioeconomic context that shaped the rise of *funk*. Chapter 4 will explore the social history of *funk carioca*, focusing on its relations with civil society⁷ and the state. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss how funk's resistance and persistence reshape marginalisation in such context, followed by a conclusion.

This study is exclusively founded on secondary research. The case study is based on existing academic and audio-visual material on the Funk movement. The theoretical framework is focused non-exclusively on studies on anthropology and social geographies. I present this analysis while acknowledging my positionality as a Rio de Janeiro, white, economically-privileged male. As I observed the cultural practices and the state violence in marginalised territories, I grew interested in such dynamics. Nevertheless, my theorisations depart from such place of privilege.

⁶ Shaped by marginalised communities (Marriage, 2019)

⁷ We refer to Gramsci's definition of Civil Society, as a public sphere where bourgeois' hegemony is reproduced and legitimised. For more, see Gramsci (1971) or Heywood (1994).

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter will explore the marginalisation process from different perspectives. First, exposing the centrality of race and its service to the capitalist order. Then, its implications on the territory and culture. Finally, how the neoliberal era reshaped and aggravated such processes. The connection of these theories structures a theoretical framework to analyse how popular culture from excluded territories interacts with marginalisation.

2.1 Black Geographies

The 'Black Geographies' field investigates the Black world-making in its multiplicities, departing from the understanding that all social relations are grounded in spatial relations (Hawthorne, 2019). Diasporic realities, especially, are based on spatial recognitions and restructurings, but these social productions of space are inscribed by racial subjugations (Reyes-Carranza, 2021). These studies are critical to understanding the territorial dynamics of social marginalisation that inscribe popular cultures such as Funk Carioca, a cultural movement from marginalised black territories in Brazil.

For Black Geographies, racism is central to the socio-spatial organisation within modern society (Reyes-Carranza, 2021). This racism structures a 'placelessness' of blackness inaugurated by slavery that legalised and hegemonised black servitude, associating the black bodies as the ones 'without' (McKittrick, 2011). Therefore, this scholarship researches how racist histories reverberate and are renovated in contemporary landscapes. McKittrick's (2011) 'plantation futures' argues that the plantation past still organises the racialisation that guides capital accumulation and spatial organisation in the Americas⁸. Since slavery, these black spaces have been portrayed as places of danger and violence, normalising premature death (McKittrick, 2011).

⁸ The following chapter will explore how the colonial legacy shapes the contemporary realities of black communities in Rio de Janeiro.

Many studies of racial violence disregard the life and resistance within these communities, further dehumanising these populations as unfit to “write, imagine, want, or have a new lease on life.” (McKittrick, 2011, p.955). As this scholarship analyses black lives focusing on the space rather than the body, it escapes reducing these livelihoods to violence, racism and lack. Alternatively, it explores its power and languages within the community, offering “liberatory, anticolonial and alternative world-makings” (Hawthorne, 2019, p.9).

This spatial analysis focuses on the construction of a Black Sense of Place, defined as “the process of materially and imaginatively situating historical and contemporary struggles against practices of domination and the difficult entanglements of racial encounter” (McKittrick, 2011, p.949). The racial violences⁹ (concrete and epistemic) suffered by these communities shape but do not define black worlds. The black senses of place are produced by developing social lives in specific geographic locations (Reyes-Carranza, 2021). Therefore, in investigating its sociabilities and diasporic cultures, we find attempts to construct their own cultural territories – and find new leases on life.

However, attempts to build a black sense of place are treated as threats to modernity, coloniality and whiteness (McKittrick, 2011) – as decolonial scholars complement. Quijano (2007) argues that the racial-social classification of the world population is the cornerstone for the ‘coloniality of power’ that structures European modernity superiority – and legitimises inequalities. It is not only a subjugation of other cultures to the European but a colonisation of the other cultures – colonising the imagination of the dominated, limiting the ability to produce alternative perspectives. Racial subjugation is protected by repressing the construction of Black Senses of Place marked by strength and a counter-hegemonic culture.

⁹ “Concrete and epistemic actions and structural patterns intended harm, kill, or coerce a particular grouping of people” (McKittrick, 2011, p.947)

Studying racial dynamics in the Americas and South Africa, the decolonial theorist Maldonado Torres (2016) describes the metaphysical catastrophe - the division of people in degrees of humanity – as central to the coloniality project. The ‘sub-humans’ face a paradigm of constant war that aims their extermination, both physically – through police, judicial and economic violence – and internally, stripping them of value, confidence or self-esteem.

McKittrick (2011) frames these as ‘urbicidal acts’ (“practices of place annihilation”, p.947) inhabited by racialised and dehumanised social enemies, such as the removal of slums, the displacement of poor communities and police violence. Investigating police violence in São Paulo, Vargas and Alves (2010) argue that state violence is an index for levels of citizenship in Brazil. Afro-Brazilians experience state violence from the police but also through social mechanisms such as education, healthcare and labour markets – a citizenship not tied to rights but to exclusion. The police lethality, for the authors, is part of the state's deliberate reproduction of boundaries of privilege and exclusion, complemented by symbolic violence that impacts these communities. Yet, the final aim is not extermination, since these racist differentiations are fundamental to capital accumulation (Robinson, 2000 [1983]).

The Racial Capitalism literature, inaugurated by Robinson (2000 [1983]), argues that racism is constitutive to capitalism (Issar, 2020), enshrining and legitimising the inequalities required for accumulation (Melamed, 2015, p.77). The differentiation of society through race dictates the division of capitalism, offering a constant supply of cheap subaltern labour (Kapana, 2012). Harvey (2003) argues that capitalism depends on scarcity, which is guaranteed by the racial dynamics’ social separateness (Gilmore, 2002), producing social marginalisation that offers “unnecessary deprivation (...) in the midst of plenty” (Harvey, 2003, p.940).

Explaining social orders by cultural or biological traits removes tensions from inequalities and allows abuse (Issar, 2020) by creating degrees of humanity (Kapana,

2012). These social orders are maintained by different racial technologies designed to contain and dehumanise marginalised communities in different social scenarios (Chari, 2008) – both by the state and civil society, complementarily. Gramsci bases his dual conception of the state on two forms of domination: hegemony and coercive power. Civil Society diffuses the hegemony of the elite's ideology, using the media and arts as a central tool. Political society exercises domination through the judicial-coercive power, maintaining the established order by strength, using the police, army and different spheres of government (Gramsci, 1971). Therefore, the state plays a central role by institutionalising sub-humanity, securing race differentiation and guaranteeing subordination (Melamed, 2015) – as in the case of São Paulo presented by Vargas and Alves (2010). In this research, we will investigate how the criminalisation of funk – by the media and the state – served to update the marginalised profile and legitimise its oppression.

2.2 Territory, Culture and Marginalisation

The differentiation portrayed by Racial Capitalism and Decolonial scholars is indissociably structured by and structuring of space (Hawthorne, 2019). Within this context, urban segregation represents the racialised continuum of control of the urban territories. Lefebvre explores how 'every mode of production (...) produces a space, its own space' (Lefebvre 1991, p. 53) – as does racial capitalism, using space as a discursive practice to determine social identities. Territorial domination extends from a more concrete and functional political-economic domination to a subjective and cultural-symbolic one (Haesbaert, 2004. P.95-96). Reading from Lefebvre, Haesbaert (2004) explores how the capitalist dynamic has suffocated the possibilities of space appropriation, with domination prevailing under the state-entrepreneur apparatus, commodifying spaces. This is a strategy to create and maintain the geographical context through which we experience the world and give meaning to it – excluding critical

perspectives and securing hegemonic order. The fight for the culture of a place, then, is inscribed in the territorial division of the city.

During the 20th century, Culture reached centre-stage as the political fights migrated from physical and compulsive forms, centring on culture and aesthetics (Hall, 2009, in Lopes, 2010). Not surprisingly, Cultural policy in Latin America is still connected to European culture, neglecting local movements that approach marginality and decolonial thinking (Canclini (2008), in Lopes, 2010), what Freire (1972) names 'cultural invasion'.

Paulo Freire (1972) argues that 'cultural invasion' is a fundamental characteristic of social oppression, both as a domination *per se* and a domination tactic. The invaders (elites) penetrate the marginalised cultural context, where the oppressed must see their reality through the elites' optic, understanding themselves as inferior. The oppressed are alienated, accepting the universal truth imposed and stripped of creativity and consciousness of oppressions, dominated culturally and economically. As the invaded are mimetised, they are manipulated, and the invasion is more stable. However, a culture originating from the oppressed, their realities and experiences, would raise mutual recognition of oppression. A cultural revolution would be the fundamental instrument for a revolution in society.

To protect the *status quo*, the state and civil society (expressed by the media) repress the art and culture produced in the margins carrying the experiences of these communities, including imprisoning and killing the artist youth (Moraes et al., 2022). Any effort to supersede the dominant order and discourse, threatening the elites' decision-making privileges, is criminalised (Freire, 2008, in Marriage, 2019). Therefore, cultural resistance is revealed as a central social clash. Gramsci understands cultural resistance as a "war of positions", attempting to reconfigure society (Gramsci 1971, 229–39, in Marriage, 2019).

We will investigate the role of popular culture from below within this 'war of positions'. In studying Capoeira, Marriage (2019) argues that popular culture can spark change in its political environments. By offering a different perspective on life, it empowers marginalised communities, critiquing the inferiority of the subalterns and offering agency for the oppressed. When historically underrepresented communities inscribe places with their culture and meanings, they question hegemonic discourses and coloniality itself (Reyes-Carranza, 2021). Ultimately, building a decolonial aesthetic offers a positionality of power through an identity that challenges the metaphysical catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

Lopes (2010) argues that these identities are created, not discovered. It is a performance, a "continuous process of redefining, inventing and reinventing dialogically their history in language" (Lopes, 2010, p.81). The identities created through counterhegemonical culture are responses to the exclusion of modernity, forming a 'survival culture'. Homi Bhabha (1994), scholar of culture and post-coloniality, discusses the 'survival culture', a culture produced in the act of social survival as a subaltern response to the modern globalised world. Precariousness challenges and induces resistance that, through imagination and collectivity, organises survival arts and culture as a response to living with vulnerable rights (Moraes et al., 2022). The dehumanising repression ignites popular culture as a creation of meanings to existence and life (Facina, 2020; Marriage, 2019). For Luiz Antonio Simas, a historian specialising in the popular cultures of Rio de Janeiro, "the party is a space of subversion of denied citizenships" (2019, p.122, author's translation).

The black diaspora, especially, finds culture as a way of rebuilding lost connections and territories through new identities – not digging old ones (Gilroy, 1993). The unique connection of diasporic communities through music and rhythm, as we will see in the case of funk, finds common recognition in African musical roots but, more importantly, through the experiences of urban marginalisation and racism. The

construction of these new identities are, therefore, stands against exclusion and oppression, resisting the marginalisation that originates in slavery times.

2.3 Neoliberal Penal State

However, these marginalisation processes had a significant shift in the nexus of social marginality, racial divisions and state policies in the late 20th century (Malaguti, 2003b). Marginalisation had been treated as a tool for the capitalist project, placing racialised communities in a subaltern condition through structural violence to provide cheap labour for economic growth (Escobar, 1992; Wacquant, 2003a). This marginalisation secures a dehumanised sector of society, guaranteeing an extensive reserve army of labour.

However, with the rise of neoliberalism, this process was aggravated by what Wacquant (2008) calls the "fateful triangle" formed by "economic deregulation, ethnoracial division, and state restructuring" (p.58). The state withdraws from the economic and social arenas, deregulating labour markets and removing social security networks. Concomitantly, the urban economies are reshaped by a shift from Fordist industries to business and services economies, shattering underqualified labour demand with a high impact on marginalised communities such as the Brazilian favelas or the US ghettos (Wacquant, 2008). At this point, the extensive poverty is superfluous as a reserve army of labour, serving as fateless poverty that needs isolating, neutralising and power destitution (Bauman, 2000, in Malaguti, 2003).

Thus, emerges what Wacquant names the 'Neoliberal Penal State', where the "war on poverty" is substituted by the "war on poor" (Wacquant, 2003a, p.24). The author describes it as a "centaur-state", guided by a liberal head over an authoritarian body, applying the "laissez-faire" over social inequalities but brutally paternalist when administrating its consequences (Wacquant, 2003a, p.21). As urban poverty and

marginalisation rise, a paradoxical *facette* of the neoliberal state surges to isolate the marginalised from the elites by incarceration and enclavisation (Wacquant, 2009).

The discourse is to fight crime that rises with the lack of economic opportunities in the margins. However, the state iatrogenically occupies itself with the risks of poverty and crime, not its causes or motivations, blaming misery on the underprivileged families. Police and judicial powers systemically resource to contain disorder in the everyday life of families of poorer neighbourhoods, filling prisons with non-violent criminals and vulgar delinquents (Wacquant, 2003a). The prisons and the urban marginalised areas form a continuum as spaces of containment of the socially undesirable and, further, sites of strengthening criminal organisations that offer economic and symbolic empowerment opportunities (Wacquant, 2008, 2009).

The media serves a central role in legitimising the penal state's repressive power by creating a punitive hysteria and dehumanising the marginalised groups – limiting their rights (Batista, 2003; Lopes, 2010). Despite the media discourse of a crime epidemic in the US, criminal infraction rates did not change significantly from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s (Wacquant, 2003a, p.63). However, criminalisation is the act of the neoliberal state to blame its failures on the poor (Batista, 2002), having punishment as the ultimate social conflict resolver (Malaguti, 2010).

Within this context, the big media criminalises and stigmatises minority cultures, reinforcing social exclusion (Herschmann, 2000). Batista (2002) describes how “from the TV screen, every day, (...) slowly drips a poisonous look on criminality and poverty” (p.6, author’s translation). The state violence against these groups is legitimised, as they are stripped of their humanity whilst portrayed as social enemies. Politicians weaponise the framing of an enemy, finding electoral gains through the immediatism and visible initiatives to contain crime, abusing the spectacularisation of police violence and criminalisation of the poor (Wacquant, 2003a). Wacquant (2003a), therefore, argues that the big media are an obstacle, and not instrument, for the democratic debate.

Such neoliberal penalty is especially seductive in countries with deep inequalities, reduced democratic traditions and limited institutional power to cushion the social shocks of neoliberalism, as Brazil and most Latin-American countries (Wacquant, 2008, p.57). The monstrous narratives of urban crime energise the existing racism and prejudices that shaped these societies, and the penalisation of urban marginality evolves into the militarisation of such territories.

This chapter has connected different theories on social marginalisation, how hegemonic power perpetrates it, and its implications on culture and territories. Departing from this framework, we will discuss the popular culture intricacies in reshaping this debate through the case study of funk in Rio de Janeiro.

3 A Brief History of Marginalisation in Rio de Janeiro

This chapter will introduce the construction of the enemy territories and identities in Rio de Janeiro before placing the *funk* movement within his process. Therefore, we will briefly describe the construction of Brazil's dangerous classes, from colonialism to the early republic, understanding the transition from slave labour to capitalist urban labour as central to the creation of marginalities (McKittrick, 2011). After that, we will contextualise the late 20th-century socioeconomic scenario, within which *funk* is embedded.

3.1 The Construction of Marginality in Rio de Janeiro

Brazil was the world's largest importer of enslaved people, with over 5 million enslaved people, 2 million to Rio de Janeiro alone (Slavevoyages.org, 2019). From as early as the mid-16th century, the socialisation of these individuals encountered state repression, with the prohibition of black festivities and black people attending *bailes* (dances) (Moutinho, 2020). However, these populations found their forms of sociabilities, as explored by a series of authors (e.g. Malaguti, 2003; Simas, 2019).

The history of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil finds an inflexion point in the early 19th century, with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family to Rio de Janeiro in 1808. Malaguti (2003, 2010) describes the city's social restructuring, marked by the massive arrival of Africans filling the streets with their culture. The elites' fear of the blacks structured the Brazilian state's penal architecture, including the founding of the police in 1809. From 1810 to 1821, 80% of the prosecuted were enslaved people, and 19% were formerly enslaved people (Holloway, 1971, in Malaguti, 2010, p.8). The repression of these enslaved populations concurred with their cultural marks within the city – spaces used for black celebrations were also sites of police torture of enslaved people (Malaguti, 2010). Malaguti (2003) details how the collective fear of the 'dangerous classes' played

a central role in post-independence Brazil, influencing economic policy, legislative activity, sanitary policies and everyday life – solidifying the black as the social enemy.

The final part of the 19th century was marked by a modernisation project, with the abolition of slavery (1888) and the proclamation of the republic (1889) significantly impacting the urban scenario. The problematic slavery abolition offered no compensation or policies for the freed population (Osipova, 2019). They faced extreme vulnerability and, in great part, concentrated in the cities in search of economic opportunities, where they found limited to no access to land and housing (Malaguti, 2010). In Rio de Janeiro, the poor and the freed enslaved people concentrated in the central parts of the city, living in *cortiços* (tenements), searching for work opportunities and creating a common culture. However, these populations and the poor living conditions they endured did not fit the modernity project idealised by the bourgeoisie under the First Republic (1889-1930) – a coloniality pursuit of a European culture as a universal model (Quijano, 2007). While the elites and government searched for "racial quality" by attracting European migrants to whiten the country (Poets, 2015), they removed the racialised from sight. Legislatively, the state repression adapted through the Criminal Code of 1890 prohibiting African religions, Capoeira and vagrancy (criminalisation of those who could not prove income), an instrument to repress any black recreational activity (Cymrot, 2011; Moutinho, 2020).

An urban planning project known as *Bota Fora* (Put Out), based on Parisian ideals and with eugenic and hygienist characteristics removed the *cortiços*, 'cleaning' the centre and creating the marginal territories of Rio de Janeiro (Simas, 2019). The poor were forced out of the central parts of the city either to the suburbs or up the hills, forming and peopling the first *favelas*. *Favelas*, informal communities on the cities' hills, appeared in the late 19th century with *cortiço* removals and were accelerated by urbicidal acts in the following decades, along with the migration of the rural poor (Moutinho, 2020). These territories suffer from historical otherisation, with their dwellers labelled enemies to the city or second-class citizens, establishing territorial boundaries and – through it – social

control (Fernandez & Rodriguez, 2015). As Barnes and Savell (2021) illustrate, police violence has been a common trait in favelas since their early years.

However, whilst central Rio followed a European aesthetic pattern, removing blackness, the suburbs and favelas built their own territorial identities and cultures (Simas, 2019). The common parties, the *Bailes* (dances), were central to forging the identity of all city territories (Santos, 2002). However, the marginal territories occupied under the *Bota Fora* had limited to no cultural instruments to hold these events (Moutinho, 2020), limiting artistic expression. Though, from African religion sites in the late 19th century, Samba surged.

This musical and cultural movement formed an identity of these marginalised territories, centred around samba schools (and African-religion centres). These form associative institutions of invention and maintenance of community identities, redefined after the black diaspora's fragmentation (Simas, 2019). Furthermore, they serve a social service of education through alternative pedagogies of freedom, escaping the official modernity pedagogies of oppression (ibid.). The diasporic traces in Samba include musical continuities from Bantu Central-African traditions (Moutinho, 2020).

Forming a collective identity of marginalised territories and blackness, Samba found severe state repression during its first decades (Moutinho, 2020). The simple act of carrying a tambourine was considered a symbol of *vadiagem* by the police, and samba manifestations were often prohibited (Simas, 2019). The samba artists and community found employment in-between lower-qualified urban services and informal work opportunities, navigating marginality but with a (limited) insertion into the capitalist society.

From the 1930s, Samba was coopted into the formation of a national identity (Palombini, 2012). State propaganda invented a Brazilian identity as the country of mixed races, where all people are the same, symbolising the 'Racial Democracy Myth' – a

society with harmony between races, free from racial conflicts or differentiation (Bernardino, 2002). Samba, the movement that rose in the margins of Rio de Janeiro, reached the radios and big media in a whitened version – removing the drums that carried strong African heritage and silencing the thematic of the lives in favelas (Lopes and Facina, 2012; Moura, 2022).

Within the construction of the racial democracy myth, the marginal territories – especially the favela – represented the social enemy openly. The stigmatisation of the black, poor and *favelado* (favela dweller) marked the dehumanised agents of society that received discrimination, poverty wages and subaltern work. However, the late 20th-century carried extreme marginalisation, worsening the city's social, political and spatial divisions from the mid-1970s and reshaping the realities of these communities (Poets, 2015). Facina (2009) describes it as the period of "neoliberal devastation", with the substitution of "the welfare state for the penal state, destining the poor to the police force or jail" (p.5).

3.2 The late 20th-century urban context

The military dictatorship (1964-1985) inaugurated the war on drugs, associating it with communism and symbolising it as an internal public enemy to Christianity and morals (Poets, 2015). Batista (1997) marks the period as the shift from a sanitary to a military drug policy. The agent of such militarisation is the Military Police, the main police institution in Rio de Janeiro (Poets, 2015). The local of such militarisation is the favelas, with removals and violent incursions that included extortion, harassment and murder (Barnes and Savell, 2021) – establishing criminal insecurity and a climate of terror amongst the lower classes (Wacquant, 2008, p.60). Between 1968 and 1975, the municipality removed 70 favelas and over 100,000 dwellers (Barnes and Savell, 2021).

This marginalisation worsened continually with the social and economic downfall of the 1980s, known as the 'lost decade' of Brazil, with the subsequent arrival of neoliberal reforms opening the economy and drastically reducing the state's role (Wacquant, 2008). Rio de Janeiro's economic downfall was accentuated by an industrial exodus to the state of Sao Paulo (Poets, 2015). The widening social inequalities, precarious social services and rising "un(der)employment" – shaped by a corrupt police and justice system – fed the rise of urban violence (Wacquant, 2008, p.59).

Brazil reached its highest levels (yet) of violence in the 1990s (Wacquant, 2003a). This rise was centred on urban scenarios (Muggah, 2014) around favelas, where criminal factions filled a void left by the state (Franco, 2014). These criminal factions originated mainly from prison organisations, peopled by the imprisonment policy of marginality that overcrowded jails (Barnes and Savell, 2021). Alves (2015) investigates PCC, the country's biggest criminal organisation, arguing that racism and symbolic marginalisation fuelled the organisation with frustrated young men in-between a "hyperconsciousness of race and a permanent state of anger", redefining power relations over territories (Alves, 2015, p.79). These groups assumed territorial control of fragile lower-class communities exposed to deindustrialisation (such as favelas), capitalising over the rise of cocaine consumption by the upper classes (Wacquant, 2008; Poets, 2015).

Wacquant (2008) precisely reports the tragic rise of neoliberal penalty in Brazil during this period. He points out that the Brazilian state became an agent that escalates such violence and fear due to the failure to institute the rule of law, develop a formal bureaucratic apparatus, and contain the criminal sector. The economically and socially fragilised favelas "emerge as both the prime targets and the proving ground" for the neoliberal penal state in the name of the war on drugs (p.58-59). In Rio de Janeiro, the criminalisation because of drugs went from 8% in 1968, to 16% in 1988 and 70% in 2006 (Malaguti, 2010).

Under this context of segregation and neoliberal reforms, an increased militarisation led to a constant urban war logic, installing an exception state in the margins. Wacquant argues that beyond a penal treatment to poverty, Brazil and other Latin American countries treat it militarily, in a neoliberal military state (2003b), characterised by a "full-scale militarisation of urban cleavages" (2008, p.70). GENI-UFF (2023) reports 616 police slaughters between 2007 and 2022 in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. In the same area, from 2020 to 2023, the police were responsible for 35.4% of the total killings (ibid.). In 2022, the police killed 1330 people in the State of Rio de Janeiro (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2023).

Neoliberal fear, allied with the media frenzy, legitimises the war and torture on favelas, sedimenting these as the spaces of crime (Poets, 2015). Violence against these territories is accepted in a relativisation and desvirtuating of human rights, separating who is worthy of human rights or legal protection, through Brazil's "inclusively inegalitarian citizenship" (Holston, 2008, in Poets, 2015). Alongside the dehumanisation of favelas, Poets (2015) also mentions a "rise in segregationist urban planning" (p.186) in this period, marked by the rise of enclaves since the 1970s through gated communities, armed guards and further surveillance mechanisms (Wacquant, 2008). These infrastructural violences reinforce the separation from the rest of the city and, hence, exclusion.

Meanwhile, the racist divisions underlining such violences are enlightened, shattering the Racial Democracy Myth. Wacquant (2008) points the complete contamination of police and judicial forces from racist and classist behaviour since slavery. In 2020, 86% of the police killings in the state of Rio de Janeiro were of black people, besides representing 51.7% of the overall population (Ramos et al., 2021). The black people are economically abused, with an average income representing 51% of the white's average income in 2021 in the city (IBGE, 2022). Finally, they follow the territorial

divisions we explore: 72% of favela residents in Brazil identify as black (Meirelles and Athayde, 2014).

This context showcases how the neoliberal era reshaped marginal territories in Rio de Janeiro, penalising poverty with a military apparatus directed at the socially undesirable, who are blamed for social ills. In the next chapter, we will explore the history of funk within this context, analysing how marginalisation processes centrally shaped the movement.

4 The Social History of Funk Carioca

During the 1970s, in Rio de Janeiro, a cultural movement that would later set the *phono-mechanic*¹⁰ structure and culture for *baile funk* spread around the suburbs: the *Bailes Soul*. These parties played US funk music and associated with the blacks, carrying anti-racism ideologies and adopting the associated black movement (Vianna, 1987). The *phono-mechanic* revolution, with vinyl and lo-fi, offered a financially accessible leisure option (Moutinho, 2020).

Hundreds of soundcrews spread through the suburbs with parties for up to 15,000 people (ibid.), creating a space for black sociabilities, identification and mutual recognition under the military dictatorship. This movement was coined Black Rio by a 1976 news article that attracted public attention. Portrayed as a potentially leftist and revolutionary, Black Rio found public resistance from the media and government (Freire, 2011), lost strength and was overshadowed by Disco Music in the late 1970s.

4.1 The 1980s and the first era of Baile Funk

The 1980s marked the first moment of *Baile Funk*, limited to imported US music and with irrelevant attention from the media or the state. Nevertheless, the construction of a sound and political renovation of black culture in the suburbs and favelas independent from the elites (Lopes, 2010) would strengthen a marginal culture that, in the following decade, would reach centre stage in social debates.

In 1982, the fall of Disco Music made way for the rise of the first *Baile Funks*. These parties inherited the phonomechanic structure from Bailes Soul (Moutinho, 2020) but did not carry its political anti-racist discourse (Freire, 2011). They played the emerging Hip Hop and, most prominently, the subgenre Miami Bass. This originated from

¹⁰ Mechanic audio structure associated with sound amplifiers, independent from live performance

Latin-American and Caribbean influences in Florida and carried a theme of partying and free sexuality (Lopes, 2010; Facina, 2009).

Vianna (1987) reports over 700 *bailes* per weekend, mobilising around one million (mostly black) people, becoming one of the city's most important entertainment (Facina, 2009). The construction of a black sociability in the margins of Rio de Janeiro offered an identity filiation option to this youth. Dancing was collective, in ecstatically uniform choreographies comparable to religious manifestations that blurred individualities into a unity (Vianna, 1987). However, violence was a constant trait and challenge.

Fights between dancers were customary, making security a primary concern – and cost – of these events. In Vianna's (1987) interviews, the participants portrayed the baile funk as a moment of relief from the violent and exhausting life they were subjected to. Meanwhile, DJs saw themselves as therapists of the masses, arguing that they limit the city's violence. The author's ethnographic work points to a strong connection between the violence these groups were socially exposed to and the fighting that broke out in the dance hall. Remarkably, Bailes at favelas dominated by organised crime were the safest since they would guarantee the event's security.

During the 1980s, the Baile Funks were limited to importing US music sung in English, with no national production (Vianna, 1987). However, this started to change from 1987, with a second technological disruption in Baile Funk history, now allowing DJs to produce original material – by mixing records and adding beats and voices.

This musical turn represented a revolution in funk, marking the 1990s by reaching the centre stage in Brazilian cultural, political and criminal debates. With songs in Portuguese, arose the figure of the MCs¹¹, changing the bailes' dynamics: group choreographies lost space to individual dancing and fighting reached a central role

¹¹ Master of Ceremonies

(Cymrot, 2011). This fighting was protagonised by *Galeras* (crews), groups formed by the youth from a particular neighbourhood that would create an identity around this local and fight other *galeras* for territorial recognition and visibility. In October 1992, one of these fights originated a milestone in the social imagery of funk and its relation with the city.

4.2 The 1992 *Arrastão*

Two *galeras* had a misunderstanding at a *Baile* and set an encounter the next day at Ipanema Beach, in one of Rio's richest neighbourhoods. The "theatre of violence" that was common at *bailes* and their suburban surroundings reached the elite's territory, causing panic and a massive media outbreak in what the media labelled as an "*Arrastão*" (Herschmann, 2000, p.2). *Arrastão* is a diffuse term with varied meanings, associated with turmoil created by young poor running compactly through an urban area, supposedly with the intention of robberies (Cymrot, 2011). However, using this term is a discursive tool to criminalise this youth (Lopes, 2010).

The police recognised that there was no purpose of robbery (Essinger, 2005), with a full crime-report limited to the stealing of one pair of sandals and one beach-towel. Nevertheless, the media repercussion was massive, citing robberies from shameless barbarics, blaming one actor: the *funkeiro* (funker). This inaugurated the criminal profiling of the *funkeiro*.

Herschmann (2000) offers a comprehensive analysis of funk's treatment by the leading newspaper in the country, highlighting that in 1992, 94.8% of funk stories were in the police and criminality sections. Lopes (2010) describes the "fear cartography" (p.35) in newspaper stories that portrayed city maps associating *baile funk* locations, favelas and criminality – a symbolic violence (Facina, 2009). *Funkeiro* profiles in such stories created a symbol of evil, associating with drug traffickers and adding to the imagery of the socially undesirable (black, poor and from favelas), a previous social construct of the enemy (Facina, 2010; Herschmann, 2000).

The immediate reaction from the middle classes was ultimately revealing. Black people on the beach were perceived as a sufficient reason for despair (Lopes, 2010). An organised movement attempted to limit the transport that connected the suburbs to the beach by closing these bus routes on weekends, unsuccessfully (Lopes, 2010). These two reactions are distinct gateways to understanding the territorial threat that the *arrastão* represented.

The geographer Milton Santos sees the *Arrastão* as a fight over the territories, with the poor being treated as prisoners of their neighbourhoods, only allowed in the rich part of the city in subaltern conditions (Cymrot, 2011). The territorial expansion provided by public transportation allowing this youth to attend the beach is met by social, racial and generational frontiers that expel them. Meanwhile, the youth that promoted the *arrastão* attempted to break with the underlying oppressions and claim their right to the city. In the event, one of the young men claimed that they intended to "frighten the rich, show that the beach is not exclusively theirs" (p. 46). This, paradoxically, creates social visibility as it contributes to constructing an identity of the *Funkeiro* of power through fear (Herschmann, 2020).

4.3 The Division of Funk

After this episode, Funk suffered an intense and continued criminalisation process, starring criminal sections of newspapers and being treated singly by the police authorities, linked to death, violence and robbery (Lopes, 2010). Headlines such as "Funk movement leads to despair" (p.37) placed the movement as the primary social enemy, blamed for all social maladies. The solution offered was simple: closing the *Bailes*. The organised state attack on funk started in 1995, when the city council of Rio de Janeiro investigated the connection between funk and drug trafficking, failing to prove any connections (Cymrot, 2011). Nevertheless, the police operations Rio I and Rio II, in 1995, banned singular *bailes* based on judicial decisions. From 1997 to 1999, some of the most important sound crew owners were arrested under allegations of apology for

crime, corruption of minors and ideological falsehood. In 1999, several *bailes* were closed, including a "forty-day ban" on thirty *bailes* (ibid.).

Paradoxically, the demonising media repercussion also amplified the movement, giving a platform for national discovery and energising its popularisation (Herschmann, 2000). Middle-class youth started attending *bailes*, and TV shows played the music, but the stigma was still associated with the favelas and funkeiros, in a division of *funk*. The subgenre Funk Melody stood out with lyrics on romance and comedy associated with pop music and more acceptable for the market. The media differentiates it, naming Funk 'Sangue Bom' ("Good blood", in a literal translation) and publishing headlines such as "Funk leaves the ghetto", treating the musicians as pop artists and not funkeiros (Lopes, 2010, p.45). Wacquant (2003a) outlines the Ghetto not only as a describing concept but as a control mechanism of exclusion and production of invisibilities. In this context, as the 'Funk leaves the ghetto', it becomes visible, unlike the territory that is still oppressed.

Lopes (2010) explores how black cultures are constantly between criminalisation and commodification/expropriation. In the late 1990s, funk was suffering both processes, with its territorial practice being criminalised, while a whitened version – dissociated from the genre's territorial origins – reached the mainstream media (p.48-49). At the same time, artists started to foresee funk as a possible income and path out of poverty by developing a chain of production and consumption around the genre. As the manifestation stops being singly a source of entertainment and public existence, the artist starts having their lyrical content shaped by recording companies (Lopes, 2010).

However, as the media appropriates funk, it resists in favelas as a marginal movement, assuming a form of a hybrid cultural manifestation (Cymrot, 2011). With the state and media repression leading to the closure of *bailes*, the Funk movement found

refuge at *favelas*, tightening its connection with these territories. Under this context arose a new subgenre known as *Proibidão*¹².

4.4 Proibidão

The *Proibidão* consolidates a musical shift incorporating Afro-Brazilian rhythms that started in 1994 (Palombini, 2012; Moutinho, 2020). Lyrically, its theme is the violent everyday life of these territories, often centring the narrative on the image of the drug dealer or drug factions.¹³ The media and state find outrage in the content of these lyrics, labelling it as an apology to crime and using it as a new discursive instrument to close Bailes Funk (Lopes, 2010) – leading to the arrest of MCs (Essinger, 1995). However, the discussion of the criminalisation of these lyrics bypasses the social tensions we explore.

The reality portrayed in *Proibidão* describes the favelas' routine from the marginal perspective, shaped by the state policy of war on the poor (Facina, 2009; Lopes, 2010). Many criminalised lyrics were factual descriptions of actual violent events suffered by the MCs, including police abuse (*Sou Feia Mas Tô na Moda*, 2005). *Proibidão* is then criminalised for publicising the reality of favelas, thus silencing the marginalised voices that denounce the actual problematics and allowing only the hegemonic discourse. *Proibidão* rises as a part of the fight for the narrative, a social speech to fight social battles, the voice of favelas (Lopes, 2010; Freire, 2011).

As the media denounced the *Proibidão*, it enhanced its reach and attention whilst reinforcing the favela as the local of "evil" (Lopes, 2010). The funk movement embraces the term '*Proibidão*' – and the criminalisation of the *funkeiro* character. By assuming this character, it reverts the inferiority stigma of Favelas for these agents, building visibility through a symbol of vitality structured by strength and danger (Lopes, 2010). Intimidation, then, must be added to the motivations of this subgenre.

¹² "Literally, the big forbidden thing" (Palombini, 2012, p.3).

¹³ See Appendix 1 for 'Rap das Armas' (1995)

However, the direct praising of criminality in some of *Proibidão* points to a market-driven motivation. Facina (2010) offers stories from MCs who wrote and sang *Proibidão* for payment from drug-faction leaders or to get a chance to sing at a *Baile* inside a dominated favela, a market insertion strategy. Since the formal economy does not embrace this movement, the approximation to criminality makes economic sense.

This financing relationship attracted media and state attention. The accusations of apology to crime and financing by drug traffickers elevated the media criminalisation of funk in the mid-late 1990s. All forms of violence in the city started to be associated with funk by the media and having the *funkeiro* as the perpetrator subject, including football fans' fights, kidnappings, and drug trafficking (Herschmann, 2000). *Bailes* were closed on the pretext of noise complaints, under the unproved assumption of association with organised crime (Herschmann, 2000).

These public repressions allied to the violence of *Baile de Corredor* led to a crisis in funk in the late 1990s (Essinger, 2005). After an investigation from public prosecutors in May 1999, the state legislature started an investigation on *Baile Funks'* suspicions of violence, drug use and misbehaviour of children and teenagers, where the 'media coverage of violence' is officially cited as a justification (Cymrot, 2011). The resulting state law, officialised in 2000, imposed unrealistic obligations on *baile funks*, including metal detectors at venues and the continuous presence and previous authorisation of the Military Police. The police held discretion to close the venues under a series of conditions and the prohibition of songs that contained apology to crime. Cymrot (2011) explains that states do not have the power to legislate over criminal matters, but use unfeasible requirements to coerce the *bailes*. Furthermore, they delegated a great margin of arbitrariness to the police authority, enabling a "secondary criminalisation" through police repression (p.12), militarising funk (Lopes, 2010). The judiciary courts reaffirmed such process through sentences, portraying individuals as suspects simply for attending a *Baile Funk* (Cymrot, 2011).

4.5 Funk Putaria and the 2000s

From 2001, funk found renovation by shifting its theme to sex in a new subgenre that came to be known as *Funk Putaria* (harlotry). This was directly influenced by *Axe Music*, a Brazilian state of Bahia genre that reached the mainstream in the late 1980s and explored sex explicitly in its lyrics (Lopes, 2010). The favela that birthed this subgenre was Cidade de Deus, "a headquarter of black culture", where female MCs reached centre stage (Moraes et al., 2022, p.6).

The rise of female MCs – rare in the 1990s – was a mark of Funk Putaria, explored as a commercial opportunity by these artists. Lopes (2010) analyses that these manifestations are a counterhegemonic stand on the position of women, who grasp power and sexual agency, rejecting the passive classical position. As the *Proibidão* served as a counterhegemonic narrative to marginalisation on the favelas territories, Lopes (2010) argues that *Putaria* did the same for the position of women. Ultrasexualised and adopting depreciative terms as identities, they constitute an identity that challenges male authority.

Funk Putaria is treated with outrage by the media as *pornography*, *harlotry* and a promoter of child sex, reviving the demonisation of funk. However, the early years of the internet served to nationalise the *Putaria* and *Proibidão*, with the forbidden lyrics reaching out of the favela (Moraes et al., 2022). Meanwhile, alternative lyrics (radio edits) were widespread and sustained funk amplification, which consolidated in the mainstream music industry as a symbol of Rio de Janeiro in the 2000s, shaping the city's identity (Herschmann, 2005).

During this transformation – and under the repression installed by the 2000 law – a new paradigmatic case revived the demonisation and criminalisation of funk in 2002: the murder of TV Journalist Tim Lopes. The reporter was responding to alleged reports

on *Baile Funks* with live sex shows featuring teenagers, drug consumption and financing by local drug dealers (Lopes, 2010).

Months before his death, he became famous for a series of stories on the 'drug fairs' in Rio de Janeiro favelas marked by violence sensationalism (Cymrot, 2011) – making him an open enemy of the drug factions. Investigations revealed that he was captured at the favela – outside of the *baile* – and burned alive by the dominant drug faction as a retaliation for the previous stories (Lopes, 2010). Even though the Baile Funk had no direct connection with the violent murder, the movement was made responsible. The event, ultimately, was another presentation of everyday violence in favelas that shocked for reaching the middle class and elites.

In 2008, the established demonisation of *funk* led to additional legal restrictions through a new state law. This furthered unreasonable demands, including medical service with several professionals at the site and authorisations from four different state organisations that, in practice, prohibited *bailes* (Freire, 2011). Consequently, *funk* professionals and supporters founded the APAFunk (Funk Professionals and Friends Association), organising formal resistance. At this moment, leftist movements started recognising funk's identity, besides highly heterogeneous, as a "subaltern response to forms of oppression and exploitation" (Lopes, 2010, p.121).

In 2009, such organisations achieved the legal recognition of funk as a cultural heritage of Rio de Janeiro, overruling the previous legislation and asserting the state's responsibility to guarantee its manifestations (Lopes, 2010). The voting day is described in detail by Lopes (2010), revealing the political consciousness of the social significance of funk as a resistance mechanism to oppression. The politicisation of funk secured its legal recognition through an unprecedented unification against state repression.

4.6 UPPs and the 2010s

However, this legislation did not stop state authorities' repression of funk, especially under the UPP (Pacifying Police Units) control in favelas. UPPs are a Rio de Janeiro state program based on the territorial recapture of favelas and incorporation of state services, inaugurated in 2008. The invasion of the favela counted on army forces and extensive TV live coverage, searching for legitimacy through spectacularization (Facina and Passos, 2018). The drug factions were expelled, and UPP units were installed, now responsible for guarding the territory. The public policy turn, from ordinary brutal police incursions to a fixed command in favelas, was motivated by the upcoming international sports events in the city that urged for an image of security – the FIFA 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics (Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015). The program further entrenched the penal-military-state in favelas in a policy of punishment and exclusion of the poor (Franco, 2014).

The UPPs marked a new era of war against *favelas* (Lopes, 2010) and *funk* criminalisation (Moraes et al., 2022). The prohibition of *bailes* and all sorts of sociabilities – including children's birthdays – were inaugural measures of UPP units (Facina and Passos, 2018). When the police did not close the *bailes*, they oppressed the attendees on their way to the event, and even official cultural events in favelas could not reproduce *funk* (Facina and Passos, 2018).

The UPP project saw a fall in violence indexes during the first years. However, the pacifying and proximity policing principles fell through, and public confidence dropped with scandals of police murders from 2013 (Barnes & Savell, 2021). After the 2016 Olympics, a financial and public security crisis known as the 'UPP Crisis' hit the state of Rio de Janeiro. What followed was a return of drug faction control accompanied by a rise of militias. Police brutality grew along with the right-wing politicians that support it, with 1814 police killings in 2019 (ibid.).

Under the repression inside favelas and while artists were fighting for the right to produce their music and hold *Bailes*, Rio de Janeiro lost the mainstream protagonism of funk. From 2012, in São Paulo, the producer and manager Kondzilla rose with a market-oriented funk, promoted through a successful YouTube channel inspired by gangsta-rap videos. This inaugurated a new reigning subgenre: *Funk Ostentação* (Ostentation), themed on money spending and earning, a face of extreme consumerism inside funk (Moraes et al., 2022).

With the fall of the UPPs, Bailes Funk arose again, reconquering Rio de Janeiro's protagonism from 2017 through a new subgenre known as 150bpm, with *bailes* hosting over 25,000 people (Rosa, 2020). The success drew public attention to the movement in 2019, leading to the closure of the bailes and arrest of artists. However, as quickly as the *bailes* were closed, other *bailes* appeared, in a constant renovation (ibid.).

Once again, while the movement was repressed in favelas, its music reached mainstream success. Funk is the most internationally listened to Brazilian genre on Spotify (Deltafolha, 2019) and the second musical genre most listened to in Brazil (G1, 2020). In the next chapter, we will discuss how these processes affect marginalisation.

5 Discussion

In the past chapters, we have explored the profiling and segregation of marginality in Rio de Janeiro and how funk is inscribed in this history. Civil society and the state have commodified *funk* through its mainstreaming but criminalised its experience and agents. By repressing survival cultures that empower a black sense of place, the state sustains the subaltern position that feeds coloniality and racial capitalism. In Rio de Janeiro, this criminalisation is a continuity from the prohibition of slave manifestations (Facina, 2009), including Samba. Simas (2019) argues that this control of bodies has continually been a part of the project to disqualify the historically subalternised culture producer classes. For funk artists, "the state already helps when it 'doesn't' interfere". (Moraes et al., 2022, p.4) – since the *baile funks* have persisted besides constant repression over the last three decades.

This resistance, however, is inscribed in the construction of a counterhegemonic identity and a black sense of place. *Funk* resists cultural invasion through a survival culture founded on diasporic connections. Progressively, *Funk Carioca* – as other popular cultures from below – helps reshape the dehumanisation processes and the territorial divisions, presenting the favelas as places of rights – and not only of lack.

This chapter will discuss the meanings and consequences of *funk's* repression and resistance, analysing how the movement has replied to marginalisation.

5.1 Division of Funk

The simultaneous movement of commodification and criminalisation of black cultures – experienced by *funk* (Lopes, 2010) – is analysed by Smith (2016). In exploring black culture from the Brazilian state of Bahia, she characterises the paradoxical reality of a place of black fantasy and culture, being also a place of black extermination by the state. Blackness is simultaneously defined by culture and by pain. This paradox is not

contradictory for the author, as it serves modernity's positionality of the black body in pain and control.

In the case of funk, the music and its originating experience, the *baile*, were dissociated through the media. Studying newspaper's repercussions on funk in the 1990s, Herschmann (2020) says that the hegemonic media stood between glamorising and demonising funk – differentiating subgenres between 'evil funk' and 'good funk' (Lopes, 2010). At this stance, funk's glamourised presence in the media contributed to the racial democracy myth (Rosa, 2020).

Nevertheless, the hegemonic media's reproduction of *funk* invisibilised *bailes*, portraying *funk* as dissociated from its territory and culture (Rosa, 2020). This allowed the criminalisation of favelas to continue while their culture is appropriated. The music that departs from that territory was homogenised with lyrical adaptations and softening of beats (ibid), as happened to Samba. Funk then became one of the most popular Brazilian music genres, featured as a 'party music' throughout all social classes and reaching international visibility (Rosa, 2020). Meanwhile, the *bailes funk* demonisation contributed to the favela imagery of violence and vileness. Hence, funk is praised as a market product simultaneously to the criminalisation of the funkeiros and their experience. Therefore, such criminalisation is not of the musical genre funk but of poverty and the social enemy that, from the 1990s, carries the title Funkeiro (Facina and Passos, 2018). However, funk is not divisible, as the *baile* is central to producing and renovating Funk music and aesthetics (Rosa, 2020). Then, such division does not reach completeness, and the outreach of the genre still gives visibility to the favelas.

5.2 Territorial restructuring and identity reshaping

The favelas are portrayed as the enemy territory and the opposite of the city, where no rights are valid and state violence is legitimate (Lopes and Facina, 2012). Funk is a revindication of this sociocultural space (Herschmann, 1997). Besides its precariousness and violence, the inhabitants carry pride and belonging of favelas, which

is exposed in funk lyrics and through the artistic names, often referring to their original community. While the media homogenise all favelas as a single enemy territory, failing to encompass their diversity and all expressions that live in it, *funk* praises its particularities and values (Lopes and Facina, 2012).¹⁴

Hence, funk's counter-narrative resignifies the favelas as integral parts of the city, retracing the city's symbolic geography and defending the *favelados'* citizenship (Lopes, 2010). Funk integrated the culture of the favela and made it visible to the elites by attracting the middle-class youth to the *bailes* and carrying the culture of favelas to other places. Therefore, the city's divisions are challenged by funk, confronting the placelessness of black communities.

The identities of the favela youth are also reshaped. Lopes (2010) argues that identities are subaltern responses to the domination of modernity as they structure survival cultures in the margin for the materially and symbolically excluded. The funk movement offered an “antidote to the ideology of subaltern integration” (Palombini, 2012, p.1) by subverting marginal representations. The *funkeiro* profile, as described by Zaccone (2007), is filled with power and confrontation, with no resignation to the misery and hunger surrounding the favela. It is an identity of resistance, of confrontation with the hegemonic power (Facina, 2009). The collectivity of such construction is its strength and reason, as the individualism of struggles portrayed by liberal capitalism is fought in sociabilities of mutual recognition (Vianna, 1987), building consciousness of oppression.

This identity amounts to the collective survival culture of favelas that has strong connections with the violence it suffers. Death is a motivator of survival culture, as Moraes et. Al (2022) puts it: “the certainty of death triggers the daily celebration of life” (p.4). Funk celebrates being alive, as art in favelas gives surviving meaning and artistic contours to its brutal reality, walking the thin line between life and death (Facina, 2020).

¹⁴ See Appendix 2 for “Endereco dos Bailes” (1995) lyrics

This is a continuity of popular culture history in Rio de Janeiro marked by the party over and around the pain as a motivator of celebration (Simas, 2019). The alleged association of the genre with criminal organisations is not to be condemned, as this is the reality where they are inscribed.

In this sense, funk serves the task of popular culture that Simas (2019) proposes: to go beyond resistance but re-existence, reinventing affections and sociabilities within the oppressive reality (p.84). This movement offers a counterpoint to dehumanisation by amplifying the silenced voices in favelas.¹⁵ Thus, it challenges coloniality relations by offering a perspective that questions "power organised as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and as domination" (Quijano, 2007, p.178). By empowering alternative cultural discourses, funk is decolonial in that it builds intercultural communication and exchanges experiences that do not follow the European universality model (ibid.).

The decoloniality of funk is also present through its diasporic nature, expressed through the music, dancing, and the Baile experience (Lopes, 2010). Mourinho (2020) provides a profound musical analysis of *funk* as a diasporic conjugation of black rhythms and culture from the US, the Caribbean and Brazil. Rosa (2020) portrays the *bailes* experience as more corporeal and sonorous than visual – as hegemonic European culture. The sound systems, originating from Jamaican culture in the Bronx, in New York (Gilroy, 2001), vibrate internal organs in the frequency of the music, experiencing it with the whole body, producing a 'sonic domination'. These diasporic connections find recognition through the African roots but mainly through the urban marginalisation and racism these communities experience throughout the Americas (ibid.).

The particularities of funk, however, are profoundly shaped by the neoliberal devastation and the penal-military state accompanying it – as is evident in comparison to Samba. Funk represents a continuity of Samba in structuring the favelas' culture

¹⁵ See Appendix 3 for 'Rap do Silva' (1996)

(Lopes, 2010), but the socioeconomic contexts shape the differences in the social discourse between the genres. Unlike during Samba, the neoliberal moment of funk fails to fit the workforce into dignified jobs (Lopes and Facina, 2012). The racial democracy myth is shattered (Herschmann, 2000), and the economic exclusion destroys the mirage of social justice or ascension since the subalterns are too superfluous to serve as a reserve army of labour. Finally, the ongoing 'war on poor', with the favela as the enemy territory, forbids harmonic integration. Therefore, while Samba is inscribed in the formation of the racial democracy myth, funk denies it, representing Brazil as marked by racism and exclusion. As the experience of the favelas has changed, the poetry dedicated to it also changes.

Funk's discourse and aesthetics then confront hegemonical discourse in creating an empowered black sense of place. The movement carries decolonial potential in untying the familiar knots between blackness, favela, violence and death by building spaces of encounter and recognition. Following Paulo Freire's (1972) prescriptions, the elite's discourse has its universality questioned with the rise of subaltern critical thinking. For the author, the oppressed find their development in overcoming the contradictions of cultural invasion and finding their voices. Lopes (2010) points that funk literates young authors from the favela to build their identities through diasporic practices. In this sense, funk presents a pathway for development in offering the stage for the marginalised communities to become actors of their own history – questioning their marginalisation.

However, besides funk's symbolic empowerment of favelas, its territories' material reality is still embedded in extreme violence. Hegemonic power furthers its oppression to the light of counterhegemonic culture. Rosa (2020) shows that the severe repression of *bailes funk* in 2019 only came after the mainstream success of the 150bpm subgenre. Therefore, *funk* sheds light on marginalisation¹⁶, offering a critique, but has

¹⁶ See Appendix 4 for 'Rap da Felicidade' (1995)

not reshaped it so far. Nevertheless, by voicing the oppressed, funk already portrays the importance of popular culture.

6 Conclusion

Within the scope of this research, we have explored how marginalisation interplays with popular culture from below. Culture offers an alternative subjectivity or personhood, where these populations are not disposable. Through constructing a valuable black sense of place, the marginal territory and its population are gradually perceived – by themselves and the observers – as deserving of rights. Freire's (1972) cultural revolution – that enables a social revolution – depends on this phenomenon. These movements, then, are relevant to restructuring society.

However, from the case study of *funk*, they are insufficient. The hegemonic order resists, renovating and intensifying its repressing technologies. The voices that emerge from marginalised territories' popular culture questioning hegemony are silenced through state violence. Understanding the history of marginalisation in Rio de Janeiro, we acknowledge that this control of bodies has continually been a part of the project to disqualify the historically subalternised culture producer classes (Simas, 2019). Therefore, this process is not unprecedented but a renovation of an enduring process.

Simas (2019) describes an epistimicide in Rio de Janeiro, a destruction of practices, knowledges and cultures that do not fit into the canonic western pattern. Meanwhile, new ones arise and resist, such as funk. The technological revolutions that birthed the genre meant a sound and political renovation of black cultures – accessible and independent from elite culture (Lopes, 2010). Throughout these four decades the Baile Funks have consolidated as a traditional experience in favelas (Rosa, 2020). Therefore, the marginalised communities reinvent their existence while resisting structural violence. These counterhegemonic narratives taint modernity and build awareness of oppression, and empowering them is a path to escape structural inequality.

Further academic research is necessary to understand how popular culture retraces territories and identities, and how this might reshape socio-political landscapes. Due to the secondary research limitations of this work, we have centred our case study

on the historical repression of the funk movement. An ethnographic analysis of how the Bailes Funks changed throughout these forty years would importantly frame the aesthetic construction suggested. A lyrical analysis of the funk's history could also reveal how the poetics were reshaped throughout the decades. Furthermore, some critical aspects of funk have failed to fit the delimitation of this research, including its gender dynamics and the dance involved. Finally, many other contemporary popular culture movements from marginalised communities offer different case studies to investigate and compare, including Angola's Kuduro and Latin-American Reggaeton.

Studying and debating the marginalised communities' cultural manifestations portrays their strengths, not lacks. Through this perspective, public policy and debate can focus on their empowerment, listening to their demands and acting on their potential. By reconquering their agency, these populations are humanised as protagonists and worthy of rights – counteracting the hegemonic discourse. Thus, the voices and beats of the silenced can reshape the socioeconomic order dependent on their abuse.

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Appendix 1

Rap das Armas (Weapon's Rap) - Author's Translation

Cidinho and Doca, 1995

Available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rj-Q-cgG70I&ab_channel=UltraRecords

Parapapapapapapapapa

Paparapaparapapara clack bum

Parapapapapapapapapa

Faith in god, DJ!

Dendê Hill, it's hard to invade

We and the *germans* (enemies) are going to have fun

Because I'll tell you how the things work in *Dendê*

Here, it's not easy even to the *DRE* (*Narcotics Supression Police*)

To come here, up in the hill, even the *BOPE* trembles

It's not easy for the Army, Civil Police or Military Police

I give my best friends the biggest praise

But *Dendê Hill* is also God's place.

One comes with an AR-15 (semi-automatic rifle), the other with a 12 (*inches gauge shotgun*)

One more with a pistol and another with a 38 (*caliber revolver*) Entorpecentes

One comes ahead with an URU (*submachine gun*), guarding the police's van

There are two more in the rearguard, but with Glock (pistols) in hands.

Friends that I don't forget and I don't leave them for later

Here come two fellows with 762 (semiautomatic rifles)

Firing into the air, just to test

With INA-Ingrotek (rifle), UZI (submachine) or Winchester (rifle)

'Cause they're bad bandit and nobody has job

With an AK-47 (rifle) and a shotgun in the machine gun

This rap is cool, I tell you

Who are that guys carrying M16 (rifles)?

The neighbourhood have said they can't stand it anymore

At the favela's entrance there are .50 (caliber rifle)

And if you take a shot, will you scream?

Be from a .50 or a .30

But if he's a cop, I don't leave for tomorrow

I kill this bastard, I shoot him with a Pazan (rifle)

'Cause these *germans* are all rascals

They come with old guns, fire two shots, then flee in fear
If I don't have a gun, I'll beat you down
And I end up this rap, detonating a grenade

Parapapapapapapapa
Parapapapapapapapa
Paparapaparapapara clack bum
Parapapapapapapapa

Appendix 2

Endereco dos Bailes (Baile's Adresses) - Author's Translation

MC Junior and MC Leonardo, 1995

Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhdt-ZUx9DY&pp=ygUTZW5kZXJlY28gZG9zIGJhaWxlcw%3D%3D>

In Rio has mulata and football,
Beer, cold draft beer, lots of beach and lots of sun, yeah!
There's a lot of samba, Fla-Flu at Maracanã,
But there is also a lot of funk going until the morning
Let's get the it together and set foot in the baile, DJ

Chorus:

Ê ê ê ah! I ask for peace to agitate,
I will now speak what you want to hear
Ê ê ê! Watch what I want to see
The address of the Bailes I will tell you

Is that from Friday to Sunday at Rocinha the hill fills with pretty girls
Coming to the dance to enjoy
Listening to charm, rap, melody or montage,
It's funk on top, it's funk on the bottom,
I don't know where to go

Vidigal does not miss it
Weekend rolls a cool shock baile
Friday at the Galo is holy
The lively crowd makes the Baile a festival

There's another dance that the crowd is shaking
It's at the Leme Baile at Morro do Chapéu
At Tijuca there is a Baile with no mess
The crowd goes crazy at Morro do Borel

(Chorus)

Come Clube Íris, come Trindade, Pavunense
Vasquinho de Morro Agudo and the Baile Holly Dance
Pan de Pillar I know people like it
Signs, Nova Iguaçu, Apollo, Coelho da Rocha, yeah!

Come Mesquitão, Pavuna, Vila Rosário
Com Bangu Casino and União de Vigário
Balanço of Lucas, Creib by Padre Miguel
Santa Cruz, Social Club, let's have a lot of fun

Volta Redonda, Macaé, Nova Campina - That also has a lot of chicks that shake
the hearts
But I'm sorry where there are a lot of pretty chicks
It's in Rocinha's favela at Clube do Emoções

Come Coleginho and the court of Mangueira
Call these cool people
To the Mauá Baile
The Country Club is at Praça Seca
Please never forget,
It is in Jacarepaguá

(Chorus)

There are many clubs and Favelas that I spoke about
I often enjoyed, had fun and sang,
But this is not enough, let's make peace together
If it weren't for violence, the funk dance would be too great.

Me, Mc Junior sang to invite you,
You can't miss Rio's Baile Funks,
And for you who are not yet aware
Now Mc Leonardo a piece of advice will give you

You can come along with your friends
And at the Baile to have fun, come respectfully,
Dance, dance with the head dance,
With the bootie dance or leading your little train

2x(Chorus)

Appendix 3

Rap do Silva (Silva's Rap) - Author's Translation

MC Bob Rum, 1996

Available at https://youtu.be/vlZ9MGgC1NI?si=E6JG-HdA2fB_GrN

Everyone should pay attention to this story
Because many friends go to the baile to dance
To forget the conflicts, to leave the fighting behind
And to understand the meanings when the DJ explodes it
(Play the rap, DJ!)

Chorus:

It was just another Silva that the star doesn't shine
He was a funkeiro, but was a family man
(x2)

It was a sunny Sunday
He went out in the morning
To play his soccer
Took a rose for sister
Gave a kiss to the kids
Promised to not be late
Said to his wife he would be back for lunch

2x(Chorus)

He was a worker, rode the packed train,
And a good neighbour, he was well considered
And everybody said he was a great guy
Others criticized him because he was a funkeiro

Funk is not fashion
Its a necessity
To quiet the wailing that exists in this city

Everyone should pay attention to this story
Because many friends go to the *baile* to dance
To forget the conflicts, to leave the fighting behind
And to understand the meanings when the DJ explodes it

2x(Chorus)

REFRAIN

And as night fell he got ready
It was to enjoy the party
That in his veins pulsed
He went with his best shirt
Sneakers he bought with his sweat
And well before the time he was ready
He met up with his friends
Caught the full tram
His eyes shined

He was excited
His joy was enormous
At seeing that they had arrived
He was the first to step off
And by some was greeted
But on that sad corner
A subject appeared
With a twisted face
His soul was pitch dark
Carried an 'iron'
In one of his hands
Pulled the trigger
Without giving any explanation
And our poor friend
Who went to the party to enjoy
Today with his family
He will not return to sleep

2x(Chorus)

on that sad corner
A subject appeared
With a twisted face
His soul was pitch dark
Carried an 'iron'
In one of his hands
Pulled the trigger
Without giving any explanation
And our poor friend
Who went to the party to enjoy
Today with his family
He will not return to sleep

Appendix 4

Rap da Felicidade (Happiness Rap) - Author's Translation

Cidinho and Doca, 1995

Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pD8k2zaLqk&pp=ygURcmFwIGRhIGZlbGljaWRhZGU%3D>

Chorus 1:

All I want is to be happy
To walk peacefully in the Favela where I was born (Yeah!)
And to take pride and have the awareness
That the poor has their place

Faith in God

DJ

(Chorus1)

Chorus 2:

All I want is to be happy, happy, happy, happy, happy
Where I was born
Hmm
And take pride
And have the awareness
That the poor have their place

My dear authority, I don't know what to do anymore
There's so much violence I'm scared to live

Because I live in the Favela and I'm very disrespected
Sadness and happiness that walk side by side

I pray for a protective saint
But I'm interrupted by machine gun shootings

While the rich live in a beautiful big house
The poor are humiliated and trodden on in the favela

I can't stand this wave of violence anymore
I just ask of the authorities to be a bit more competency

Let's go

Let's go

(Chorus 1)

(Chorus 2)

Nowadays, we can't even think about having fun
Because even in the bailes they come to humiliate us
Hanging out in a square, which used to be normal
Now violence is a trend at the local

Innocent people that have nothing to do with it

Are today losing their right to live
I've never seen postal cards with pictures of a favela
I've only seen really beautiful landscapes

The ones that leave Favela, miss it
The gringos that visits here, don't know our reality

They go to the Zona Sul to drink coconut water
While the poor in the favela are always living on the edge
There's a new president and a new hope
I suffered in the storm and now I want calm

The People have the power, they just need to discover it
If they won't do anything over there, we'll do it all from here

Speak up

(Chorus 1)

(Chorus 2)

Nowadays, we can't even think about having fun
Because even in the baileis they come to humiliate us
Hanging out in a square, which used to be normal
Now violence is a trend at the local

Innocent people that have nothing to do with it
Are today losing their right to live
I've never seen postal cards with pictures of a favela
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If they won't do anything over there, we'll do it all from here

(Chorus 1)

(Chorus 2)