

The Independent Electronic Music Party Scene/Circuit in São Paulo

A Panorama of the 2010s

by

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The independent electronic music scene/circuit in São Paulo—techno, house, and their subgenres—migrated from clubs to street parties or locations in central areas of the city in the 2010s. This scene/circuit has a strong political bias, focusing on the uses of urban spaces, LGBTQIA+ rights, corporeality, and aestheticization. Ethnographic study of the activities of four collectives highlights their ways of occupying and claiming the right to the city and the diversity and temporal dynamics of the circuit.

A cena/circuito e música eletrônica independente em São Paulo (tecno, house e suas vertentes), migrou dos clubes para as festas em ruas ou locações em áreas centrais da cidade na década de 2010. Esta cena possui forte viés político ressaltando os usos dos espaços urbanos, os direitos LGBTQIA+, as corporalidades e estetizações. Evidencia-se a centralidade da música e sua dimensão comunicacional e política: dança, corpo e identidades aliadas à construção de modos de estar juntos e ocupar a cidade. A metodologia centra-se na etnografia de quatro coletivos e suas festas em suas formas colaborativas/autogestionárias e maneiras de ocupar e reivindicar o direito à cidade e a diversidade e dinâmica temporal do circuito.

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Reflecting on public urban spaces in the city of São Paulo is a complex task because of the historical and social memory that we have inherited, which involves a narrative with its origins in the pioneers/colonizers of the seventeenth century and is connected to the blurred notions and collective imaginaries of “the country's locomotive,”¹ a place for passing through that is built around private spaces or workplaces without a life of its own in the streets. This

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is combined with a sprawling exclusionary urbanism, a city of walls (Caldeira, 2000). Still frequent in the practices of state power are policies that have little concern for stimulating life and leisure in public spaces.² As researchers and wanderers (Jacques, 2012) of the contemporary city, we have noticed indications of what appears to be a São Paulo option for closed spaces that deserves to be examined more closely (Pereira, Rett, and Bezerra, 2021).

In recent years we have reflected on musical and media practices, urban and youth cultures, and the way the city is used by a variety of collectives³ of young people seeking creative means of being together, producing, making, and disseminating music, using and appropriating the city, (re)territorializing places, and granting political meanings to these urban experiences. This is a creativity that is shown not only in musical and performative expressions (authorship, combination of genres, mash-ups, facilities, etc.) but also in ways of managing music spaces, parties, events, associations, and forms of cooperation (Pereira, 2017). We have seen an increasing occupation of traditional public spaces such as streets, squares, underground tunnels, and sheds in actions carried out by youth and artistic collectives, often challenging institutions such as the municipal government, the traffic engineering agency, and the police.

One movement with global and local dimensions has shed light on the occupation of urban spaces and the right to them. In São Paulo, it became visible in the 2010s through actions both by collectives linked to urban issues and through government agendas in the use of city squares and streets for official or other events and the expansion of Carnival, which in recent years has been including electronic music. There has been a demand for streets to be open to pedestrians on weekends and holidays and occupied by street music and related activities (Pereira, Rett, and Bezerra, 2021). Reia, Herschmann, and Fernandes (2018: 12–13) remind us that the occupation of the streets with music is not only spatial but also aural, social, and cultural, since music “transmits a message; its interaction transforms the space, interacts with the senses, connects people with the environment. . . . The mere fact of occupying public spaces that were not originally designed for this purpose makes it a political act.”

This article focuses specifically on the independent (as distinguished from the more commercial) electronic music scene/circuit (techno, house, and their subgenres)⁴ that, starting in 2010, moved from closed/private clubs to street parties or semipublic places (Delgado, 2007), in the process incorporating new meanings and agendas. Some of these agendas had already appeared on the club scene (LGBTQIA+ rights, corporeality, and youth aestheticizations with a strong political bias), but now they were more explicit. Most of the people associated with this independent movement were activists or had some daily relationship with political issues. Up through March 2020 (the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when social isolation rules were applied in the city) these parties were held monthly, bimonthly, or sporadically and in a rather artisanal and collaborative way (Gallo and Semán, 2015). In some cases, there was a greater degree of professionalization beginning in 2017.

The parties that we identified and participated in are as follows: Amy Vainohouse, Apex, Baile em Chernobyl, Bicuda, Blum, Caldo, Capslock, Coletividade. NÁMÍBIÀ, Coletivo GEMA, Coletivo s/ lokal, Coriza, Cosmolivee, Dando, Darq, Dusk, Festa Autônoma Temporária, FOFIS, Gop

Tun, Grude, House of Divas, Mamba Negra, Metanol FM, ODD, Pista Coletiva, PSICO.TRÓPICA, Póros, Sangra Muta, SILVER/tape, Síntese Coletiva, Versa, Vampire Hauss, and YMNK. Initially, they took place in streets and squares or even vacant lots; the collectives that organized them sought authorizations and permits for each of the events—a task that has become more difficult and bureaucratic under the (more neoliberal) city administration that took office in 2017. It was at that time that the laws on the use of public spaces became more rigid and prohibitive.

Attention must be paid to the historical dynamics of this electronic music scene/circuit in the 2010s: (1) the first parties at the end of 2010, (2) the peak of this circuit between 2013 and 2016, and (3) the relative saturation of events and confrontations with those in power beginning in 2017, all of which was aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. These changes helped to create a renewal of the scene/circuit with the appearance of new collectives and alternative fixed locations for the parties. Understanding this temporal dynamic requires us to relate the musical scene/circuit and its political meanings to the use of urban spaces and the visibility of LGBTQIA+ youth groups with issues that involve elements of national macrostructural and institutional policy. The 2010s began with more progressive governments at the federal level and, beginning in 2013, at the municipal level in the city of São Paulo. This situation went so far as to make possible the June 2013 protests (see Antoun and Falcão, 2015; Gondim, 2016). From 2015 on, progressive agendas lost ground, discrediting culture and artists both in thematic agendas in the media and in the hegemonic agendas of institutional power. Added to this was an economic crisis giving rise to more conservative and reactionary forces at several levels and culminating in Jair Bolsonaro's presidential victory in 2018, driving the social movements, activism, and cultural actions into marginalization and persecution.

While situational aspects do not determine the actions of youth and urban groups and their artistic/cultural scenes, we cannot disregard them in the local phenomena that we are analyzing. The dynamics of the electronic music scene/circuit in São Paulo over the past 10 years began with a few parties largely connected to the underground scene. Recent years have been marked by increasing confrontations with the government, a certain saturation of the scene, and a bifurcation of paths (Pereira and Gheirart, 2020). Addressing this scene/circuit, we emphasize its diversity and heterogeneity, internal contradictions, and constant dynamics.

In this context, a number of electronic music parties captured our attention in the empty streets of industrial/commercial districts on weekends, in tunnels and squares in more central areas of the city, and in small bars in the old city center. The ethnographic work involved lasted two years, from January 2018 to December 2019, and consisted of structured and semistructured interviews with the creators Carolina Schutzer and Laura Diaz, from Mamba Negra; Mario Dal Santo, from Síntese Coletiva; Diogo Zion, from the Autônoma Temporária; and Paulo Tessuto, from CapsLock; with the cultural firebrand Cláudia Pinheiro; and with the author of the 2017 book *MEB: A história da música eletrônica brasileira*, Eric Marke. We also used notes and field observations from 30 events and other articulations through the media and

social networks, speaking with Karen Cunha (an events professional in the Municipal Department of Culture) and Cláudia Assef (writer, journalist, activist, and manager in the Municipal Department of Culture). Finally, we report our participation in two 2019 meetings of the *Movimento de Festas Independentes de Cultura Alternativa* and the São Paulo City Council with former alderman Soninha Francine (author of the project for Electronic Music Day) with the participation of independent party producers for discussions around common demands and ways to improve dialogue with the government.

Our objective is to understand the parties produced—their activities and their forms of self-management (production, publicity, organization). At the same time, we want to understand the “outside-of-party” activities carried out by these collectives, which include courses, workshops, meetings, festivals, etc. In the diversity and heterogeneity perceived among the collectives, what they appear to have in common is the pursuit of electronic experimentation and the centrality of music and its communicational dimension in urban environments (Pereira, 2017), bringing people together to dance, perform identities (Yudice, 2005) and build bonds and activism (Fernandes and Herschmann, 2015) and ways of being together, occupying the city aurally, socially, and culturally and mobilizing politically in dialogue with various institutions.

We begin with a discussion of the (new) political meanings triggered by corporeality and spatiality that are present in this circuit of parties and their connections to a theoretical framework of questions about affection, corporeality, and spatiality in the city. After that, we offer a brief historical sketch of the electronic scene in São Paulo, whose heyday was in the 1990–2000s, and a movement of this scene to independent parties in other spaces. Next, we present and analyze the information obtained from our fieldwork on the activities of the subjects and collectives chosen for their diversity and their paths, ruptures, and discontinuities.

USES OF SPACE AND BODIES IN THE CITY

The configuration of experiences of São Paulo’s independent electronic music collectives seems to be an example of the creation of temporary autonomous zones in the city. This idea, from Hakim Bey (2001), helps us in analyzing the movements generated there and their social and political meanings in a context of confrontation with the state. The configuration of experiences in temporary autonomous zones (Bey, 2001) and in the heterotopic spaces (Foucault, 2015) that are established there points to the spatial/territorial dimension and its importance for the visibility of more plural identities in the city. These parties are political acts through which issues such as urban art, inclusion, mobility, hygiene, and the occupation of city spaces circulate. Party producer/organizer agents attempting to reinvent ways of being together and producing and publicizing events appropriate the city, (re)territorialize places, and grant political meanings to these urban experiences. Articulations between politics and aesthetics (Ranciére, 2009) result in new forms of sensitivity, dissent, and the construction of other ways of living in and using the city. This is what

González-Victória (2011) calls “action art,” anchored and effective in the body but also the city, giving it a new meaning and serving as a component of individual and collective recognition. All these cases include a search for playful and festive ways of making use of the city of which the role of performative identities is a fundamental part.

Since the 1990s, the notion of subject as central to the understanding of social process has been accompanied by an appreciation of bodies as a locus of aestheticization and political meaning—including a dialogue with Michel Foucault's (2015) analysis of the discipline of bodies and their possibilities of subjectivation and the notion of gender, sexuality, discourse, and performativity arising from Judith Butler's (2018; 2019) reflections. In dialogue with these considerations, a field within the social sciences called the sociology and anthropology of the body has emerged that stresses structures and changes, coercion, and agencies. Furthermore, in studies of Ibero-Latin American youth, the notion of youth bodies, agencies, and subjectivities has been gaining theoretical strength, reflecting on a biopolitics of resistance (Valenzuela Arce, 2009). According to Rocha (2012), rather than in traditional and institutional political expressions the politicization of everyday life is expressed in aestheticization and corporeality. Here we see the politicization of the body as a central articulator of discourses and practices, a political artifact that is not only a vehicle for transmitting messages in contemporary youth activism but also the message itself (Carmo, 2018), a marker of differences (gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, generation) and an articulator of performed identities.

We agree with Lindón (2012), who, in dialogue with writers reflecting on juvenile corporeality, states that the body may be thought of as a mediator—articulating processes of subjection and resistance, normalization and transgression, control and freedom. The notion of corporeality adopted here draws on the discussions in the social and human sciences of the 1990s that have been called the “affective turn.” According to Vila (2017), this turn calls into question the centrality of (verbal) discourses in cultural analyses, bringing to the scene the agency of subjects and processes of subjectivation that are central to the body and its uses. Here there is a Spinozian/Deleuzian basis for thinking about affect as not necessarily synonymous with emotion or feeling (in a more hermeneutic or phenomenological reading) but linked to the phenomena that occur when bodies (human and nonhuman, material and discursive) meet and affect senses of belonging and identities result. From the perspective of affect studies (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010; Clough, 2008), Vila (2014; 2017) points to the role of music in provoking affects, senses, and feelings and in the development of collectives and of oneself (DeNora, 2000), recognizing embodied affects as movement and as potentiating actions from collective encounters. In music and musical practices, these elements can be seen as articulating senses of belonging, interpellation, and the construction of collective identities, providing the use of the body with the potential for political agency and aestheticization. This is a notion of aesthetics as the creation of ways of experiencing everyday life and creating bonds—the “sharing of the sensitive” (Rancière, 2009), elements of an ethos based on creativity and the pursuit of shared feeling.

In the symbiosis of bodies and the city seen in the phenomena analyzed here, the spatial dimension is fundamental to the understanding of urban life and life in society. Space is understood as a sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity, of different trajectories and many voices, in which it is the product of interrelationships and flows and is never finished but always, according to Massey (2005), in dynamic elaboration. Just as we have to think about an antiessentialism in relation to identities (ethnic, gender, etc.) that must be understood as a process, it is necessary to reflect on space in terms of this same logic, as part of these same political subjectivities. The recognition of diversity and the construction of difference pass through the recognition of spatiality. That said, this notion of the preponderance of spatiality (beyond the separation of time from Kantian-style space) as a series of transformations further inspires us to consider the political dimension of spaces or territories as a locus of uses, affections, memories, disputes, experiences, encounters, sharing, and possibilities.

As Lefebvre (2013) proposed in the 1970s, space can be thought of in three ways: as spatial practice, as spaces of representation, and as the representation of space. Spatial practice (or lived space) is the one closest to everyday life and ordinary uses. Spaces of representation (the sensorial/sensual space of images, voices, words, sounds, smells, contacts) are the physical spaces superimposed by complex symbolic systems that encode and convert them into images and imaginaries. In addition to the space of inhabitants and users, this is the space of those who invent and create (whether artists, wanderers, or party participants) and in which there is a game in which both codes imposed from above by the dominant and practices inspired by disobedience that inhabit a more clandestine and underground side of life may be present. Alongside these two spaces (perceived and lived) there is the representation of space (or conceived space), intertwined with the first two by its ambition to prevail over them, since it concerns the power relations arising from order (the state, the market, urbanism), which seeks to establish itself even through violence and is ideological because it is hidden behind technical, cold, and expert discourses that seek to be unquestioned.

This politicized conception of space helps us to understand spatiality as a source of the production of new trajectories, new spaces of sensorial and affective representation, new identities, new relationships, and new differences (Massey, 2005), making room for new political practices that feed on the various reports and claims of the city.

PATHS OF THE ELECTRONIC SCENE/CIRCUIT IN SÃO PAULO

Straw (2013) has described the music scene since the 1990s as made up of more or less organized sets of social and cultural activities that invite us to reflect on urban cultures in new ways. These activities are constituted around music, sounds, dance, styles, fashions, aesthetics, tastes, and identities and can be organized according to genres, helping to build production and production logics and material and cultural consumption as well as urban life. The notion of the musical circuit (Herschmann, 2013) helps to broaden this view of the phenomena addressed. According to Herschmann, the notion of the circuit signals

the systematization, institutionalization, and monetarization of practices and a certain segmentation of production, circulation, and consumption. As we see it, the notion of a circuit contemplates greater heterogeneity, noncontiguous spaces (sometimes even far from the city), and various institutions and actors.

We have made an effort to cross some paths along the trajectory of alternative electronic music in São Paulo through dialogue with Eric Marke (interview, São Paulo, 2019), who recounts that “in the 1980s, underground electronic music was worked out in nightclubs, which supplied a more popular repertoire. This basically happened in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. There was no radio that played electronic music. The great popularity arose during the dance music boom, with ‘dance music’ being the American term for all electronic rhythms.” Also, according to Marke, before the 1990s records entered the country through importers, researchers, or collectors, producing an electronic music scene marked by subcultural and underground cultural elements (see Amaral, 2005; Freire Filho, 2005; Thornton, 1996). In São Paulo, the styles most often performed in clubs were synthpop or technopop, made up of a conjuncture of electronic music and pop, and electronic body music, which developed in the early 1980s in Western Europe and combined sequenced repetitive bass lines, programmed dance rhythms, and provocative themes. Marke points out that, in Brazil, the scene was concentrated in the Southeast (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte) and the South (Porto Alegre and Curitiba). The electronic repertoire became popular in the 1980s–1990s, driven by the increasing ease of access to technologies (Sá, 2003; Woodside and Jimenez, 2012).

In 1990, the first Brazilian magazine of electronic music, *DJ Sound*, appeared, and with it a scene of DJs, bands, clubs, and lifestyles was established and expanded. As Amaral (2008: 40) points out, “with so many changes and amplification of access to digital culture in recent years, the role of subcultures in relation to digital technologies has also changed.” It makes sense to connect this context to a certain decline of the Western capitalist social and economic project in recent decades, tied to the pursuit of urban youth groups for areas of individual and collective freedom. Thus a movement using the power of electronic music that began in Europe contributed to the emergence of raves (Chiaverini, 2008)—parties lasting more than 12 hours held far from urban spaces with interaction between DJs, artists, and the public and, as Marke points out, “presenting a repertoire that did not appear in nightclubs, such as techno, trance, drum and bass, etc.” Little by little, the nightclubs were conforming to the more commercial and segregating capitalist logics, establishing a VIP and *fashionista* culture. This reflected the functioning of a society of control capital: prohibiting drugs and tobacco, charging covers or requiring a minimum of consumption, false credit for leaders, etc. As Cláudia Pinheiro (interview, São Paulo, 2019), put it, “Clubs represent hypocrisy. You have to go escape into the bathroom, and only the club owner’s friends have exclusive privileges. . . . For some, everything; for others, nothing.”

The most creative and inventive characteristics in the musical and behavioral spheres gave way to the economic logics of the music industry. During the 2000s, the scene was being reduced to dust. In 2010, new itinerant parties appeared that sought to appropriate the city’s areas and give new meaning to the idea of celebration. We highlight Voodoohop⁵ and Selvagem⁶ as precursors

of this movement. At the end of 2010 the first CapsLock party, which may be called the precursor of the party model that we analyze here, took place.

COLLECTIVES AND PARTIES

A new, more consolidated scene/circuit of independent electronic music began in São Paulo in 2013. Despite having been articulated in the club scene by people motivated by international travel and experience, the movement was made up of young people who did not attend clubs. The sound was no different from that of the raves (although it lacked their variety of styles, basically keeping to techno, house, and their subgenres). What the two had in common was the pursuit of individual and collective freedom. Another element of this scene/circuit was the political meaning of the occupation of public space in relation to the body and its aestheticization (Carmo, 2018; Taylor, 2012). This new party scene/circuit was characterized by a new way of partying, a new experience (atmospheres, powerful sound systems, clothing, and aesthetics), the recovery of an underground attitude involving concrete political and artistic action, and the use of post-mass communication (Lemos, 2014) and social networks in the structure of production, circulation, and publicity.

This scene/circuit is related (albeit indirectly) to local/global aspects of the 2008 world economic crisis and the social and urban decay of large urban centers. The occupation of cities has become an expression of citizenship in the twenty-first century and an urgent agenda. As Harvey (2014) suggests, resistance to the dictates of financial capital is global, since this is the scale at which urbanization is currently operating, and it is around this process that crises repeatedly erupt. In this sense, the right to the city has become an operational motto and a political ideal, as Henri Lefebvre (2001) argued in the 1960s–1970s.

In São Paulo in 2007, through the articulation and action of groups linked to independent culture, an Independent Culture Month was created by the municipal government to promote styles, collectives, and musical genres outside the mainstream, with actions in various parts of the city. This project continued through 2012 and was expanded with a progressive and center-left ideology during the administration of Mayor Fernando Haddad (2013–2016). Independent electronic music parties grew and proliferated, and clashes with the government and other institutions did not take long to appear. Almost always organized by small groups that used only social networks for publicity, parties that at first had assembled an average of 300 people started to see attendance surpassing 1,000, something that required another mode of operation. Some of these parties, with powerful sound systems and guests, depended on substantial investments that began to be unsustainable.

At the same time, parties began to deal directly with the demands of society, drawing attention to social issues with support for political and minority causes, revitalizing the city center (which had had almost no public and private investment since the 1960s), and bringing residents and the homeless in from the periphery. This provoked a great upheaval in the public space, and because of the revenue it generated (tickets, bar, services, taxi, accessories, etc.) it robbed the clubs and nightclubs of a slice of their hegemonic economic power.

When power changed hands in the municipal government in 2017 with the arrival of a more conservative administration, new measures were implemented. In addition to seeking immediate solutions, which included efforts to push parties to more distant locations, there was a bureaucratization of the processes related to the use of spaces, and to a certain extent priority was given to the private sector, which began to try to co-opt the scene/circuit with large parties and festivals. Pressure came from the entrepreneurs who controlled this market through the Associação da Noite e do Entretenimento Paulistano (ANEP), made up of the city's nightclub owners, to make it difficult if not impossible for these parties to take place. According to those involved in the parties, this group had no dialogue with the collectives, and the actions it took relegated them to marginality and invisibility. Some parties that had obtained licenses were prevented from taking place; others received fines or ended up with residents' calling the police, and there were even cases of party organizers' receiving anonymous threats. In the center of the city, the collectives that grew organically and, already accustomed to operating with barely enough funds, found themselves having to dance around problems to be able to stay afloat, discovering new locations or operating inside of clubs or at closed locations. Today, they face the challenge of continuing these spontaneous movements (even more so after the pandemic), which are intertwined with the demands of society itself and need to be fulfilled.

In 2019 the Movimento de Festas Independentes de Cultura Alternativa (MovFica) carried out a census of independent parties in the city (defining the target audience as people aged 25 to 35 years old, mostly LGBTQIA+ and their sympathizers, and fans/lovers of electronic music such as techno, house, and disco) based on a questionnaire responded to by 30 collectives. There are no specific data on social class and ethnicity in the census, although we can see from field research that while the organizers are mostly white and middle-class, those attending the parties included young people from the outskirts of the city and black people. This highlights the nature of these types of parties as "collective spaces" (Caiafa, 2003)—places where collective life develops, strengthening gatherings, bonds, and associations and intercultural negotiations and generating life in cities and their social and communicational fabric. Collective spaces are places for group initiatives that alter and even combine public and private logics. From this perspective, the construction of territorialities that intensify the investment in difference and otherness in the city (Caiafa, 2003) can contribute to subjective and identity reterritorializations in a city historically marked by segregation. The fibers of the social fabric are reorganized and resignified when we look at the practices of the streets and adopt theoretical instruments such as collective spaces that allow us to see the small-scale actions, both temporary and tactical (Certeau, 1994), that have been taking place in the city.

Drawing on the movement's census, we can get an idea of the proportions of the parties: 51 percent of organizing collectives are legally established as micro-enterprises; some centers employ up to 100 people per event; practically all centers are inclusive when it comes to hiring staff and artists and offer VIP lists for LGBTQIA+; half of them hire women both in production and as artists. Turning to artistic production, 45 percent have associated music

labels; 62 percent of resident DJs have performed abroad; and 82 percent of DJs produce their own music. Many participate in public tenders, and some make use of funding from other public sources, combined with other sources of funding or not.⁷ The collective actions involve management, organization, negotiation, creation, articulation, engagement, and appropriation (Gallo and Semán, 2015). In short, they establish a new ethos that combines artistic activity, music, and parties as mouthpieces for political agendas, a new political economy, and resistance to the dominant logics.

Our meetings with members of the four collectives analyzed took place spontaneously as we wandered in the city (Careri, 2013; Fernandes and Herschmann, 2015). Borrowing the notion of wandering from the “situationists” of the 1950s–1960s (Debord, 1960), “drift” is considered an instrument in the pursuit of alterity (Jacques, 2012) and a methodological strategy (Fernandes and Herschmann, 2015; Pereira, Rett, and Miranda, 2021) for an ethnography of the city as a dynamic space that is updated daily from intelligible and sensible interactions in the experience of a body with playful, uncertain, subjective, sensory, and affective dimensions. Cities are open systems (Fernandes and Herschmann, 2015) that are empirically created, suggesting bifurcations, detours, and unforeseen events that take the form of electronic beats in the almost always empty historic center of the city, the movement of people, lights, etc. As a nonlinear approach, drift allows us to recognize in the communicative configuration of the city multiple phenomena of sociocultural identification, urban flows, and emerging events. In our bodily encounter with the city (or, as Jacques [2012] suggests, “corpography”), these parties produced assemblages (Caiafa, 2003) with the circuit analyzed. We worked to cross-reference data from various collectives to build a narrative that accounted for the diversity and complementarity of these parties in the wider circuit.

The CapsLock party began in December 2010, playing techno, disco, house, and experimental electronic music. Paulo Tessuto, a prominent figure in alternative clubs, wanted to transform the electronic music scene and attract a new audience. In addition to creating the character Carlos CapsLock, he developed communication inspired by the aesthetics of telenovelas and fanzines to dialogue with the public exclusively through the Internet. Today more than 24,000 people follow him on Facebook. His proposal involved interaction during the events both with the artists who make up the group and, through a dress code, with the participants. The gatherings morphed into political acts, and the itinerant aspect of the party contributed to the circulation and fluidity of the movement. The party started within VoodooHop and turned into a phenomenon replicated by several collectives.

Mamba Negra is directly linked to the feminist and black movements. Its directors, Carol Schutzer and Laura Diaz, report that it began in 2013 as part of an independent cultural movement and has aligned itself with those fighting for freedom. Mamba created ways of organizing, working, and urban intervention, and its parties arose from the idea of creating spaces for artistic and political experimentation, acting in the old São Paulo city center to explore poorly used environments of the metropolis—what the directors call “scars generated by the flawed urban plan and real estate speculation” (Carol Schutzer, interview, São Paulo, 2019). To pay for the collective’s free events, parties like CapsLock and

Mamba held paid parties, usually in warehouses and industrial parks and sometimes after the events on the street. In recent years, because of difficulties in obtaining permits and authorizations, few free events have been held.

The Temporary Autonomous Party is an arm of Voodoohop (“a branch of the same tree,” according to one of its organizers, Diogo Zion [interview, São Paulo, 2019]). It began in 2016, and its purpose was resistance to the world or “reverse gentrification.” The group sought out places that no one frequented—either out of fear of violence or because of the presence of homeless people—and occupied them without asking permission to hold nonprofit parties. According to Diogo, understanding celebration to be a cultural issue the collective realized that people no longer went out into the streets, and this led them to begin looking for places where they could hold parties. One example was Paulista Avenue, which has been closed to cars on Sundays since 2016, leaving other streets in the area inactive and available for use for parties that could be complemented by the infrastructure of the city. The collective has 6 members but extends to a group of 15. The predominant sound is deep house and techno, something that Diogo describes as between Mamba Negra and Voodoohop. Publicity is mainly done over Facebook⁸ (its page has 1,730 participants) and by word of mouth. Because obstacles may arise when it comes time to hold an event, the collective provides real-time updates disclosing the location just a few hours before the party.

Síntese Coletiva began in 2016 in a workshop at the Museum of Image and Sound in an effort to fill a perceived gap in electronic music training. This event took the audience to a studio to experience production operations and attend a kind of garage sale for the exchange of equipment. After that came the parties, with live performances, whether in nightclubs, in the streets, in abandoned buildings, or in occupied schools. Other collectives were formed from what appears to be an environment for dialogue between artists, “from those who are just starting out, and even professionals, together on the same stage, with similar conditions and opportunities,” according to Mario Dal Santo (interview, São Paulo, 2019). In cultural spaces, the group had already been involved with other collectives such as juggling, rap, and funk. Dal Santo curates and manages, alongside an eight-member “elders’ council,” a collective made up of producers and music aficionados. Generally, the organizers say, the collective’s events result in losses. The money obtained is directed to the annual budget, and until 2018 money was obtained through public funding for cultural promotion. The publicity for parties is done over social networks and by the artists who perform.

According to Dal Santo, independent parties require authorization from the municipal government and then from the fire department, the police, and the traffic management agency. (A permit can take up to 90 days to obtain.) Government fees need to be paid, and in order to take place in public spaces, the parties must be free of charge (though they may be sponsored). The organizers tell us that “if the party takes place on Avenida Paulista, they adopt the tactic of not publicizing it on social media, as the event must appear to be a spontaneous demonstration and not something that was programmed” (interview, São Paulo, 2019). The Síntese Coletiva Facebook⁹ page has 1,253 members and concentrates all the group’s communications. There you can find tips on

courses, purchase, use, rent, and sell equipment, or learn how to set up shows. You can also find synthesizer tutorials and several new software and plug-in options, work out problems, and share productions made by the participants.

The actions of the groups analyzed highlight the political meanings of these festive practices as they are articulated with discriminated-against and under-represented groups and minorities in the electronic music scene (for example, trans or blacks). In all of them, the relationship of these collectives with institutions appears to be one of negotiation (Yudice, 2005), seeking and inventing clever uses (Certeau, 1994) that respond to actions resulting from the strategies of those who hold power. In general, they see the need to strengthen networks of collaboration, since “the more conservative forces are already organized and in concert, seeking to empty out the very concept of city” (Laura Diaz, interview, São Paulo, 2019).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the activities of these collectives, this article seeks to reflect on the complex articulations between collective spaces, spatialities, uses of the city, and musical practices. Linked to an “affective turn” in the humanities since the 1990s (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010), the body, the senses, and affect related to artistic practices have gained prominence, associated with the notions of performativity (Taylor, 2011) and artivisms (Fernandes et al., 2022), epistemic categories that may escape Western hegemonic, logocentric, rationalizing, and colonial logics.

The uses of city spaces by these parties reveal their capacity to reconfigure the political and the city itself, evidencing their relational character as instruments of agency and communication in the city. In the practices and imaginaries of these collectives, music works to create new ways of conceiving, expressing, and living the political (Mouffe, 1993).

As Harvey (2014) and Delgado (2007) have pointed out, in recent years urban demands have expanded into broader networks of indignation, taking to the streets and creating articulations of aesthetics and politics that tend to be horizontal and not institutionalized. What we perceive in the collectives analyzed is that their practices are attracting the attention both of public power (to restrain them or build a dialogue) and of the market (to co-opt them). These musical practices combine aesthetic, social, and political functions and involve cultural and material consumption, construction of identities, socialities, and institutional and political negotiations, and the possibility of the emergence of collective spaces, even if these are only temporary.

We understand occupying the city together as creating the possibility of new performative dimensions of politics (Butler, 2018). Musical/cultural/urban activists resist the speed of metropolitan flows, reconfigure time, reject the agility of the culture industry, and take advantage of the speed of networks. Understanding the relationships of music (in its affective and sensory dimensions) with spaces alters the preestablished routes of reflection that may obscure the less evident aspects of urban and youth cultures and helps make visible/audible these other ways of experiencing the urban.

NOTES

1. São Paulo was founded in 1554 as an economic center and the starting point for pioneer expeditions to the interior of the continent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was only from the nineteenth century on that it gained political and economic centrality, and it was only in the twentieth century that it became a metropolis (Morse, 1970). A collective imaginary of identity was built on the city and its inhabitants in their connection to work, determination, and economic power. The expression “the country’s locomotive” was associated with the idea of driving the rest of the country.

2. Delgado (2007) suggests that the notion of public space, arising from republican-era modernity, needs to be replaced, since the idea of public space’s being the opposite of private space and the place of assembly for collective decisions, a space of equality without asymmetries and with equal participation, is in question. What we need to think about here is the notion of semipublic spaces (breaking with the public/private dichotomy) or collective spaces (Caiafa, 2003) such as those where relationships are produced in public, with bonds that are established between people who do not know each other or know each other by sight and negotiate meanings, encompassing different degrees of access, availability, and promotion of places of encounter (Reia, 2018). In this conception, public space cannot be thought of as a given; rather, it should be seen as the result of the practices that occur within it and independent of the ways in which it is used (Pereira, Rett, and Bezerra, 2021).

3. “Collective” is a common term among youth groups. According to Carmo (2018), it is a fundamental and organizational category consisting of more horizontal and noninstitutionalized political/activist groupings whose members maintain relationships of affinity and friendship. They may be unstable and contingent arrangements that are linked to other groupings in the form of networks, characterized by affectivity, different political and identity agendas, different forms of collaboration and association, and changing numbers of members.

4. “House” emerged in the early 1980s, derived from disco in the underground dance clubs of Chicago, and “techno” is a branch of electronic dance music that emerged in Detroit in the mid-1980s. These genres/styles are the basis for the electronic music scene that began in clubs in Brazil at the turn of the 1980s–1990s. During the 1980s there was also an increase in genres arising from Miami bass (born in Florida) that gave rise to funk carioca. The relationships between the electronic music scene/circuit in São Paulo analyzed here and funk carioca may be addressed in future research.

5. According to the group’s website, VoodooHop is a foreign art collective born out of a series of underground parties. In six years of collaborative events, it has brought together artists from various areas, including DJs, live artists, dancers, and visual artists. Together, they have created a multisensory tropical cabaret, mixing colorful and exuberant visuals with elements of traditional Brazilian heritage and ritual performance. The collective transforms spaces ranging from abandoned buildings to natural refuges, always experimenting with different media and formats. <https://voodoohop.com/> (accessed March 2022).

6. Selvagem is the name of the duo formed by the DJs Millos Kaiser and Trepanado and the parties they hold in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. “They believe in associative free thinking when it comes to music, channeling it with an anarchic approach, mixing disco, house, rock, techno, funk and soul from all eras and places” <https://www.facebook.com/festaselvagem/> (accessed March 2022).

7. Other financing is obtained through the “after-parties” held following the parties financed by the municipal government.

8. <https://www.facebook.com/autonomatemporaria/> (accessed March 2022).

9. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sintese coletiva/> (accessed March 2022).

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