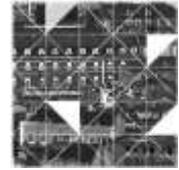


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# CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios

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## “There is no love in SP”: Music, graffiti, and youth cultures in political protests in Brazil

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### Abstract

This article aims to analyze how the articulations between two important aspects of youth culture, music, and graffiti, can inspire the emergence of political practices connected to the idea of activism in contemporary Brazil. As a case study, we analyzed the present dialogue between the graffiti “Mais amor por favor” and the song “*Não Existe Amor em SP*”, by rapper Criolo, as a potentializing element for the manifestation of collectives in the city of São Paulo at events of character that would signal a force of mobilization that would be even more highlighted in the so-called June Journeys, in 2013. Given this context, we emphasize that both music and street art can be intermediaries in the relationship between youth and territory in the resignification of daily life in large cities, functioning as a language capable of mediating the relationship between youth, territory, and politics. Under an activist orientation, this arrangement is a testament to the fact that such practices reinforce the capacity and power of the logics of on and offline mobilization that surround youth culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** youth cultures, graffiti, music, activism.

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## 1. Introduction

In an interview for a Brazilian publication (Cult, 2013) in 2011, Criolo, a rapper from São Paulo, stated that: “songs and poems become mere detail when you see a young man ending up on the streets. He is the song, the poetry, the strength of a country. I have been saying that, and Brazilian rap has been saying for the past 30 years: do not underestimate our youth, do not label our youth. Because youth is free and naked of certain protocols. And people get to know each other and connect by affinity”. In this statement, the artist sums-up some of the issues that will be addressed in this article, such as the power of mobilization from the expressions of youth cultures, the occupation of cities as a form of social participation and citizenship activism, and how music sometimes acts as a kind of ‘social glue’, an enzyme that activates, shares, or organizes a series of sensibilities.

In a historical perspective, in the last decades the debate on youth cultures has sought in some way to broaden and tension the referential state of the art on this subject, focusing especially on British cultural studies, through works such as “Resistance Through Rituals: youth subcultures in post-war Britain” (Hall & Jefferson, 1993). In general lines, authors from the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies understood youth cultures and subcultures as the gathering of youth collectives coming specifically from the working class (teddy boys, mods, punks) that gathered around coherent and fixed systems of meaning (activities, clothes, slangs, music, visuals) and, from this scope, articulated behaviors, and forms of resistance to the dominant structures.

Recently, we can access broader readings that emphasizes both the plurality of identities that may exist within a subculture, emphasizing the fluidity and multiple agency possibilities of these same identities (Bennett, 2011; Hesmondhalgh, 2005), and the transformations caused by audiovisual media and communication technologies in the development of new youth sensitivities and their cultural practices (Freire Filho, 2007), deepening the discussions around social difference markers such as gender, ethnicity and social class. In this sense, thinking about youth cultures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century implies thinking about the dynamics and practices in conjunction with these elements, and how those updates notions such as resistance and activism, as noted by the Brazilian rapper in the interview quoted above.

Criolo is the author and performer of “*Não Existe Amor em SP*” (“There Is No Love in SP”), a song used here as an object of examination that delineates the great participation that music can have in youth cultures, as we understand that music is able to collaborate in the selves by building a sense of identity in experiences that allow us to place ourselves in “imaginative cultural narratives” as Frith (1996, p. 275) proposes. In this context, since it acts in the construction of individual and collective identities, it has been used for decades by youth as an expression tool to disseminate ideas, denounce issues, raise questions and is also responsible for enabling dynamics, articulations, tensions, as well as networks of communication practices, sociability, and strategic affections in certain specialties. It has been functioning as a language capable of mediating the relationship between youth, territory, and politics.

We understand that these elements characterize a collective identity that enables the investigation of the political mobilization of the Brazilian youth through the analysis of the song “*Não Existe Amor em SP*” by rapper Criolo and the movement “*Mais Amor, Por Favor*” (More Love, Please), that spread initially in São Paulo between 2009 and 2011. This article aims to analyze the representations and articulations of youth nowadays, as well as the emergence of new political practices that are inspired by music contributions, as an intermediary in the relationship between youth and territory for the re-signification of daily life in large cities. Thus, our scope regarding contemporary youth culture in Brazil is mainly related to youth groups involved in both musical-media practices and artistic actions of various natures, such as graffiti and rap.

With a population of 12,107 million inhabitants, making it the most populous city in the country, São Paulo has 2,908,798 residents that fall into the youth statistical range (between the ages of 15 and 29)<sup>4</sup>. This presence, which

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<sup>4</sup> In Brazil, the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) establishes that an adolescent is an individual between 12 and 18 years of age; the term young is usually used to designate a person between 15 and 29 years old, following the international trend.

adds up to almost 25% of the city's population, is a fundamental aspect when considering the affirmation of youth through the production of signs, and their possibilities of imposing their own representations upon the city, in their most diverse forms: through music, partying, sports or spray-paint. Young culture, modeled and molded by its relation to the city, often presents itself as an attempt to rewrite the desires, wishes and subjectivities of the subjects that inhabit it. As pointed out by Garcia Canclini (1998):

“The sense of the city is constituted by what the city gives and what it does not give, by what subjects can do with their lives amid their habitat determinations, and by what they imagine of themselves and others, to repair the breaches, the gaps, the disagreements risen by urban structures and interactions response to their needs and desires”. (Garcia Canclini, 1998, p. 91).

We are, therefore, talking about young people who find creative and collective means to express themselves, often guided by socio-political agendas that grant them an activism stamp that will, somehow, find a plan of action for some of the big-city issues: reterritorializing spaces and adding political meaning to these urban experiences. A creativity that is shown not only in musical and performative expressions (authorship, combination of genres, fusions, installations, etc.), but, also, in the ways of managing music spaces, parties, events, associations and multiple forms of cooperation (Pereira, 2017, p. 4).

The idea of cultural and artistic performances in these proposals relate to the notion of interpretive communities, as suggested by Van Zooney (2004), where the various dimensions of popular culture are integrated by axes such as creativity, need of adaptation and creation of new mechanisms of participation, that put social issues that were static before, in motion. We're thinking youth here as actors who stage not only representations – what Street (2004, p. 2) points out as aestheticizing the landscapes of political imagination – but, also, as actors who seek mobilizations based on desires, pre-existing commonalities, actions and interventions in the social fabric; the belief in the mechanisms of popular culture as an instrument of change where, in addition to reflecting it (the times they're changing, as Bob Dylan would sing), vectors such as pop music and its songs of resistance, would act as a means of promoting them.

This perspective points out that cultural manifestations are not isolated, closed within itself but are an initial agent that sets forth interactions of an activist nature. This is a nuanced question, of course: often we can see an aestheticization of politics, more guided by a capitalization typical of the logics of the spectacle rather than by the underlying ideologies, but, at the same time, it is possible to associate youth cultures to the possibility, through their various manifestations, of transforming the street into a temporary stage for other models of expression, interaction, and participation (Freire Filho, 2007, p. 160).

In this context, the association between the “Mais amor por favor” graffiti, which occupied the streets of São Paulo (and later gained wide dimensions being shared on technical and social networks) and the song it inspired, “*Não Existe Amor em SP*”, by Criolo (which would become an initial anthem for political occupations in the city, events that could be seen as a rehearsal for the so-called June Journeys in 2013<sup>5</sup>), explains the central argument of this essay: delineate the role that two manifestations (graffiti and pop music), that have somehow been linked and affirmed as potent forms of disseminating ideas, presenting and representing youth.

Our study will be carried out in two phases. The first one seeks to understand part of the trajectory of this youth movement in São Paulo, approaching the occupation of spaces by political graffiti and the dissemination of ideas through street/urban art, as the movement “*Mais Amor, Por Favor*”. Finally, it is intended to relate the sociopolitical approach represented in the lyrics of the Criolo's music with the emergence of a youth movement that questions the current political order, understanding that the song stands as a kind of lyrical voice for some of this youth's demands. The articulation between these two points (graffiti and music) stimulated an important

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<sup>5</sup> In what can be considered one of the pivotal moments in contemporary political history in Brazil, the so-called June Journeys, transformed hundreds of cities in the country into the stage of wide-ranging social manifestations. An act was initiated against the increase in bus tickets in São Paulo, headed by the Movimento Passe Livre. The intense police violence that came as a response inspired a wave of protests that spread throughout the country, marked by the mobilization through social networks and the accumulation of new guidelines that were proclaimed in the streets, demands that included themes related to the quality of public services, the World Cup in the following year, corruption, among other topics. Finally, it was characterized by an absence of a single agenda but constituting the notion of a crisis of political representations, in a flow of manifestations that marked the period in Brazil (Perez & Mottinha, 2013).

mobilization of artistic collectives in the city of São Paulo, who appropriated the message of the song (and echoed the meaning of the graffiti) and turned it into a manifesto for a better society. As the song addresses a response to the crisis experienced by Brazil's youth, we can think of this arrangement as an example of a situation when a supposedly utopian demand becomes concrete, real, fulfilled, at least temporarily (Freire Filho, 2007, p. 160).

## 2. Youth culture and the political force of graffiti

The long history of graffiti refers to distant eras (such as Ancient Times and the Middle Ages) but takes a technical leap in post-war twentieth century with the advent of spray-paint (aerosol): an evolution that relates spray to space in the same manner that pencil relates to paper. As a powerful diffuser of ideas, graffiti has established as an activity which is intricately connected to historical events that are related to the resistance against the status quo, to a greater or lesser extent. Examples of such include the political graffiti present in either Paris (May of 1968) or Brazil, during the military dictatorship period, where the city, a typical space for these manifestations, became an arena occupied by subjects with unequal powers and desires (Campos, 2010), a collective social structure in constant transit.

However, it is also a typical narrative which is the source of inspiration and dialogue for a variety of artistic ambiences. From the streets to the songs, as it will be shown here, the interface between the graffiti displayed on the walls and the lyrics woven into the music continues adding new levels to the Brazilian book of popular songs. To this end, numerous debates arising from cultural geography, urban anthropology and urban studies (Lefebvre, 2001; Campos, 2010; Thompson, 2011; Harvey, 2014; Pereira, & Gheirart, 2018) offer keys to a reflection on how the urban space, in all of its various dimensions, offers a scope for articulating dissidences through practices and forms of resistance that are connected to juvenile cultures and subcultures in the rewriting of the city “as a stage and as a canvas” (Campos, 2010, p. 26).

As Pereira and Gheirart (2018) summarize, we are talking about “using and appropriating the city, reterritorializing places and giving political meanings to these urban experiences”, which takes place through assorted forms of writing such as graffiti, spray-painted vandalism, posters and stickers, where the polis “responds” textually and imaginatively to the events in its territory, establishing forms of communication within these manifestations that can be vectorized by varied principles or intentionality. We think of graffiti, here, as a recurring manifestation of something that the city does not offer: a witness to the absence of various needs and a possibility for the young person, living in constant tension between the self and society, to find in the activity, a way to guide their own path in face of a social structure that tries to mold and normalize all individuals. Ultimately, graffiti is a powerful tool of symbolic (counter) power (Bourdieu, 1998).

As Caldeira (2012, p. 39) emphasizes, this production of self-representation through graffiti is “one of the most innovative consequences of the Brazilian (re)democratization”, and a determining factor in thinking that, in addition to denoting a pluralism of sensitivities, it takes a stand as an anti-disciplinary practice. There is something already ontologically inscribed in the concept of being graffiti-related that is intricately linked to spite, misdemeanors, transgressions. Graffiti as politics, in the etymological sense (from the Greek *politikos*) is a matter related to the *polis*, the city. And, frequently, is related to the politics of opposition or disagreement, and under a disciplinary logic and in the molds of capitalism, the urban fabric (which clearly does not oppose the institutionally legitimized forms of visual occupation) often criminalizes graffiti as not belonging to this space, due to its illegal nature. As Campos (2009) points out, the visibility carries within itself ideological markings, stamped by territorial disciplinary instances, maintainers of the status quo:

“Advertisements and political propaganda posters, monuments to the country's heroes or the traffic signs report to legitimized forms of visual communication in public spaces, that are supported by historical justification and institutional structure. These symbols basically correspond to the protagonists of a worldview with a willingness to perpetuate itself, and that is legitimized by its very existence, taken as an undeniable reality. However, consensus is often threatened. The city is not entirely disciplined, and much less airtight”. (Campos, 2009, p. 48)

In this sense, graffiti threatens the institutionally underlining legitimacies and consensuses. As an axis of a youthful, urban counterculture, it encompasses what Garcia Canclini (1998, p. 301) points out as “the semantic struggles” that are presented to neutralize, disturb the message of others, or change their meaning, and subordinate them to its own logic; “they are staging’s of conflicts among social forces: among market, history, state, advertising, and the people’s struggle to survive” (Garcia Canclini, 1998, p. 301).

In face of this panorama, where the positioning of new voices is aligned with the possibilities of occupying the old urban landscapes, Brazil has been accompanying an extensive list of actions, that are linked to graffiti manifestations and refer to citizenship expression. Coupled with the global economic crisis, as well as the social and urban decay of large urban centers, the occupation of cities has become an “urgent agenda. In this sense, the right to the city has become an operational motto and a political ideal, as Henri Lefebvre had already professed in the 1960s and 1970s” (Pereira, & Gheirart, 2018).

### 3. “Mais amor por favor”: the power of the tag (and of the hashtag)

In this context, regarding the cooptation of spaces as a political gesture and an attempt to suspend (even if temporarily) the current order, we can see in the refusal of conventional forms of communication and everyday social relationships an intertwining, typical of 21<sup>st</sup> century youth subcultures, of macro manifestations allied with internet mediation (Freire Filho, 2007). Perhaps, this is the ideal key to analyze the “*Mais amor, Por Favor*” graffiti that began to appear in the city of São Paulo in 2009 and would soon be replicated in other major cities in the country, until ‘reinventing’ itself as a hashtag, a term that signals (through a ‘tag’) the grouping of specific subjects in social networks.

Spreading first in specific regions of São Paulo city – such as downtown and the area around Augusta Street, areas that have as typical traces, particularly after the year 2000, the accumulation of stylized graffiti and stickers spread through its streets, walls, and corners – “Mais amor por favor” was created by São Paulo artist, Ygor Marotta, and is justified by its author as a proposition,

“Amidst all the aggressiveness, indifference, and fast pace of a metropolis like São Paulo, that strives, by inserting something with this content in an urban context, to bring the observer to a state of surprise, bringing him to reflect for a while or to, at least, crack a smile while reading and passing on the message”. (Marotta, 2011)

It is necessary here to make a separation between the modalities of street or urban art practices so that we can measure more clearly than we are dealing with. Graffiti has historically been linked to the purpose of resisting the prevailing social conventions, transgressing a series of norms, due to its aspect of unauthorized registration in the public space; but, as a practice, it can take on multiple expressions, where we can distinguish those that are of a purely verbal nature (phrases, words, signatures) from those that are of the order of the pictorial (Campos, 2010). An initial form would be the tag, a rudimentary and sometimes illegible signature that would be, from the transposition of the verb to the evolved image, for more complex graphic expressions from a technical point of view (calligraphic creativity and the elaboration of new letterings) and pictorial (composition of figures and scenarios) constituting a process of “aestheticization” of graffiti (Castleman, 1982; Campos, 2015).

If, as Caldeira (2012, p. 57) says, “pichação” is a graphic intervention “with high communicative power, whether it’s symbolic or literally written, signatures, symbols, words, phrases and simple drawings”, Marotta’s creation can be characterized by its strong power of synthesis, by putting together a kind of universal desire (love) followed by a code that represents the idea of kindness (please) in the phrase. Unlike a series of examples of graffiti – where the examination of the meaning of its words is often restricted to niches – or stickers, “Mais amor por favor” (More love please) presents signs of a language that is common to the passerby (figure 1). Its interpretation leaves little room for doubt.

**Figure 1. “Mais amor por favor” graffiti**

Source: Pinterest Ygor Marotta

“Mais amor por favor” may be more evidently affiliated to the premises of graffiti imagery, as a practice that seeks several references that come from a visual culture composed of multiple circuits (painting, drawing, illustration, internet, cinema, television, animation, etc.) and is located in the process of artificial drift (Shapiro, & Heinich, 2012) of graffiti where it is presented, more and more, as a legitimate artistic expression. A recognizable trace of “Mais amor por favor” as a tag, is, also, in the fact that its spelling presents, firstly, a stability within its own aesthetic-formal rules; in this case, with its stylized cursive handwriting, which can convey to the viewer a sense of proximity with a childlike naiveté, purity or, to use a more common term, cuteness. In this sense, can be allocated on the notion of street art presented as an artistic expression legitimate, valued by the media, art market and public and private entities, that reveals a greater commitment to the economic value of artistic work and work as a commodity (Dickens, 2010), based on a more comprehensive universe of plastic techniques and expressive devices and marked by the dialogue established with the public of these forms of communication, outside the internal recognition (among peers) typical of graffiti.

In this context, the case of “Mais amor por favor” (More love please) and its desire, as admitted by the author, to “give love in daily dosages, to share respect, solidarity, generosity, gestures of kindness and affection”, encounters an expressively coherent visual translation. Additionally, when using a word that has gained historical importance in slogans of numerous generations – “Peace and Love”, “All We Need Is Love”, “More love, less war” – the graffiti tries to inscribe, through subcultural logic, the street as a “temporary stage for ‘trials’ of other models of expression, coexistence, and participation, where the demands, supposedly utopian, become momentarily concrete and tangible” (Freire Filho, 2005, p. 68).

As proposed by Conan (1994), in his propositions for a landscape theory, these considerations allow us to speculate that “Mais amor por favor” is effective in making it possible to think of a graffiti as a device for a group sharing

message, based around a common goal. In this case, referring to the occupation and transformation of the urban landscape with some type of message deemed as absent in the territory. We have models of practices that refer to common behaviors (in this case, the act of “*pichar*” [intentional misspelling of the Portuguese verb for ‘spray-painting’], which inaugurates a network for phrase sharing), symbolic objects (the tag itself, and its request for “more love, please”) and its interactions with the participation of several actors – the code shared through the use of the city as support for the “*pichação*”, for either communication or aesthetic purposes, as well as attesting to its reach as both a communicative resource and a form of mediation that is highly shareable and susceptible to appropriations.

If, as Garcia Canclini (1998) states, the dynamics present in urban culture are interdependent of the flows of communication present in the media culture, we can think that media culture often activates texts present in the urban territory. To this end, “*Mais amor por favor*” was replicated, as the author refers to it, as a “living organism”. It began to stamp more than just the urban space of several other cities, earning other forms of writing in digital environments, a typical dynamic of youth cultures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Marotta argues, through the internet, the tag “gained more publicity and life (...) and became an inspiration for poetry, music, photography and even comic strips”.

Moreover, following the memetic logic of repetition of a discursive content in the digital environment, it also propagated itself as a hashtag, enabling access to a series of network conversation. Building on to this gesture, images of the graffiti and other intertextual uses of the phrase spread throughout blogs, tumblrs, flickrs, twitters and Facebook profiles. From the ritualized appropriation of urban spaces – taken here as the walls of residential buildings, cultural facilities, street poles, sidewalks – it became a hashtag, under the logic of a culture of sharing (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013). “*Mais amor por favor*” was transfigured into another kind of message and, in this new arrangement, gained additional textual and narrative force when it began a dialogue among an extensive network of interlocutors, producers and recipients of information on a global level.

As noted by Campos (2012, p. 560), in the context of youth cultures (and subcultures), online manifestations coexist with the offline world, and they tend to feed each other in a “social delocalization” of graffiti or spray-paint “from the moment that the networks that constitute it do not reside exclusively (or primarily) in the local social ties (of neighborhood and city)”. As such, we are dealing with the constitution of an imaginary (“more love”) that is constantly being reinvented and integrated with new communication mechanisms and strategies, where the text and image of the graffiti is linked to extensive media circuits and is exposed and available to an immense audience – who was previously randomly constituted of passersby in the public space, and is now broadened, allowing for the creation of new audience for contemporary graffiti.

In this process of sharing, social bonds are strengthened, visibilities are altered, and ideas and tendencies are disseminated (Campos, 2012), as well as discussions about the effectiveness of the message, or even its communication strategies. While “*Mais amor por favor*” can be categorized as an expression like cyber activism, it can also be discussed under its media and global characters, as an innocuous expression part of the styling and aestheticization of everyday life, when the hashtag is most used worldwide on social networks like Instagram (#love) takes on debatable symbolic dimensions from the moment it starts being used on t-shirts, pictures, etc., and it becomes a typical expression of the commodification of late capitalism, in its “cute” version. In this context, its political effectiveness can be debated, and this is the key that rapper Criolo seems to work on when creating the song “*Não Existe Amor em SP*”.

#### **4. There is Fight in SP: Youth Political Mobilizations**

The emergence and practice of hip hop in Brazil, especially in São Paulo, is historically linked to the recreation of party politics in the country at the beginning of the opening that marks the return of post-military dictatorship democracy, in the mid-1980s of rap, as a musical genre, to become more and more a part of the musical culture of the period, hip hop presented itself as a tool for social empowerment and artistic practices, mainly for young people from the peripheries of large urban centers; in one of them, Grajaú, in São Paulo, Criolo would appear. So that, in

its diverse expressions and prominent names (Racionais Mc's, MV Bill, Thaíde and DJ Hum, etc.), Brazilian rap has consolidated itself as a social and dynamic activity, inscribed in activism, symbolized in what Alberto, Arouca, Pilz and Vieira (2018) stands as a “message rap”, where the denouncing aspect of the socio-economic disadvantage of those belonging to the less favored classes in Brazil has been consolidated as a fundamental mark for this music in the country, since its genesis.

To this end, it becomes important to situate Criolo in the conjuncture of contemporary Brazilian music. The rapper from São Paulo has a curious trajectory: despite being a veteran in the scene (he started his career back in 1989, developing a relevant work on the *Rinha dos Mc's*, an important collective of rappers from the city of São Paulo), he only reached national amplitude almost two decades later, more specifically in 2011, with the release of “*Nó Na Orelha*” (Ear knot), his second album. The work is symptomatic (starting from its suggestive title) of the most pluralistic character and the widening of aesthetic languages that had been scaling up in Brazilian Rap until then: if, on the one hand, it has compositions that revolve around the suburbs, and the particularities of a marginalized extremity (typical marks message rap), on the other hand, it introduces romantic approaches and a humorous narratives through a mixture of rap, reggae, samba and brega, constituting its particular universe of sonorities (Pilz, Alberto, Arouca, & Vieira, 2018).

But it is possible to credit the initial attention that album and artist had from public and critics to the second single of the album, the song “*Não Existe Amor em SP*”, released in March 2011. His 2011 MTV Brasil Video Music Awards prize winning video is a gathering of images that showed spray-painted inscriptions and graffiti drawings around the city of São Paulo, focusing especially on the “Mais amor por favor” graffiti. At the award show, the musician performed a version of the song in a duet with Caetano Veloso<sup>6</sup>, author of one of the most notable São Paulo themed songs (“Sampa”, 1978), with an arrangement that gave to the more attentive viewers the sensation of parental artistic affiliation, as well as a generational stamp: the union of poets who had the same city as a muse but versed under different temporal optics.

In several media appearances, the artist admitted that the inspiration for the song came from a graffiti on a wall next to Faria Lima’s subway station, that said “There is no love in SP”, an evident intertextuality responds directly and objectively to the popular graffiti “Mais amor por favor”. According to the musician, the song was not supposed to be in the album: it was the result of a sudden inspiration of melody and lyrics, while waiting for a recording session of the album by the studio’s door. From this starting point, Criolo broadens the idea of this lack of affection in this urban space and guides us through a song for a city in which “no one goes to heaven” while living in the cold and distressing environment of the reality of São Paulo (“Sao Paulo is a bouquet / Bouquets are dead flowers”), a reality that seeks to be hidden through photos and news that portray the city as a successful metropolis in a “ever so sweet postcard” (“*postal tão doce*”).

Thus, there is a city surrounded by graffitied walls that live within the empty souls that walk alone and without hope, obliterated by greed and vanity. The dimension of the sonority of the song can lead the audience to think of trip hop (but, without the effects, just replaying the mood of artists like Portishead or Massive Attack), a groovy drumbeat giving way to a low bass and keyboard in the foreground, with some guitar interventions. The singer’s voice is used without the typical rap features, such as rhythmic punctuation and rhymes, sounds melodic and maintains the low register of the arrangement sounding almost like a lament of sorrow and a realization, a resignation. The intervals in which Criolo is not singing are marked using strings, which guarantees a dramatic aspect to the song, in an obvious dialogue with the lyrics. So, from the get-go, the song framed in a melancholic tone synthesizes: “there is no love in SP”:

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<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvYh9jJ5gQ>

There is no love in SP<sup>7</sup>  
 A mystical labyrinth  
 Where graffiti screams  
 I cannot describe.  
 In a beautiful phrase  
 From such a sweet postcard  
 Sweet beware.  
 São Paulo is a bouquet  
 Bouquets are dead flowers.  
 In a beautiful arrangement  
 Beautiful arrangement made for you.  
 There is no love in SP.  
 The bars are full of souls, so empty.  
 Greed vibrates, vanity excites.  
 Give me back my life and die.  
 Drowned in your own sea of bitter.  
 Here nobody goes to heaven.  
 You do not have to die to see God.  
 You do not have to suffer to know what is best for you.  
 Meeting two clouds  
 In every debris, on every corner  
 Give me a sip of life.  
 You do not have to die to see God.

As we have previously stressed, the song served as a gateway to broaden Criolo's audience, previously restricted to hip hop hordes. In its first few months available on digital platforms, "Não Existe Amor in SP" reached more than 300 thousand downloads and helped boost the sales of "Nó Na Orelha". From there, he accumulated media appearances, interviews, articles, and good reviews of his work in some of the publications dedicated to Brazilian culture, such as *Rolling Stone*, *Cult* and *Trip* magazines. The official music video for the song is on YouTube<sup>8</sup>,

<sup>7</sup> Original lyrics to the song: Não existe amor em SP/Um labirinto místico/Onde os grafites gritam/Não dá pra descrever/Numa linda frase/De um postal tão doce/Cuidado com doce/São Paulo é um buquê/Buquês são flores mortas/Num lindo arranjo/Arranjo lindo feito pra você/Não existe amor em SP/Os bares estão cheios de almas tão vazias/A ganância vibra, a vaidade excita/Devolva minha vida e morra/Afogada em seu próprio mar de fel/Aqui ninguém vai pro céu/Não precisa morrer pra ver Deus/Não precisa sofrer pra saber o que é melhor pra você/Encontro duas nuvens/Em cada escombros, em cada esquina/Me dê um gole de vida/Não precisa morrer pra ver Deus

<sup>8</sup> Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f35HluEYpDs>

and it has 16,449,352 views, which allows us to infer that, as an important sample of his work, the song helped Criolo's path towards widening his audience, beyond rap or independent Brazilian music consumers. That would become clearly signalized in later projects of the artist, such as the album/tour "Viva Tim Maia!", that he performed, in 2015, alongside Ivete Sangallo (one of Brazil's most popular artists).

But, as we have said before, our focus is to dimension the song in scale with some of the youth movements of the period that have had notable repercussions in Brazil. Associated with the issues of graffiti in its birth (that is, it establishes a kind of dialogue with an important episode coming from the Brazilian culture already in its origin), we emphasize that "Não Existe Amor em SP" also acted as an important agent for new manifestations extra-musical arena. After all, with the song, Criolo articulates textually and sonically important sensitivities of the spirit of the time that the country, and specifically the city of São Paulo, were undergoing. Depicting the atmosphere of the social and economic instability of the moment, that in the future would find echo in political manifestations of multiple orders (regarding urban occupation, gender issues, partisan quarrels, etc.) and that would, somehow, echo many of the above verses.

## 5. Artivism and elections in São Paulo: There's love in SP

We understand here that the notion of 'artivism' in Brazil, in its practical dimension, is intricately connected to the constitution of collectives made up especially of young people who dedicate themselves to an infinity of practices around the ideas of art, citizenship, and occupation of space public. Citing Sousa Santos (2002, p.46), he refers to groups that materialize the fruits of the imagination from where citizens develop collective systems of dissidence and new graphics of collective life". In addition, they have a more or less evident mark of political action from which the phenomenon of organization in collectives goes beyond a simple type of association between artists and establishes itself as a plan of action for the resistance established in youth cultures, especially in their urban extracts, constituting media sabotage and semiotic guerrillas (Cabral, 2007) in urban intervention works, parodies or adulterations of commercial advertising, circulation of information, distributing books over the Internet and criticizing the laws governing copyright, theatrical performances in the streets or promote multimedia installations and presentations.

To this end, we can situate an inaugural episode where all the vectors we have pointed to (the song as one of the triggers of political and youth manifestations) have materialized. In 2012, the city of São Paulo elections motivated a notable social mobilization, related specifically to groups formed by young people who were involved with cultural activism, such as Fora do Eixo (related to independent Brazilian music) SampaPê and Santo Forte (dedicated to cultural occupation of public spaces in the city). Celso Russomanno, a conservative politician, was among the leaders of the election polls. This inspired, initially, the organization of the event Love, yes, Russomanno No, at Roosevelt Square, downtown São Paulo. Declared, then, by the collectives as "Pink Square" about the non-political (party) nature of the event and as to not associate itself with any politically charged color.

Held on October 5, the eve of the first round of the elections, and with a full-on callout in social media, the political-cultural event brought together thousands of people. Reaffirming the belief that such mobilization would influence the results of the polls, these groups held a second edition of the event, before the second round of the elections in the city, called "There is Love in SP". The central agenda of the meeting was written on the Facebook event's page, and it was also distributed in pamphlets at the event: "For years, SP has become increasingly more aggressive, repressive, individualistic, forbidden, militarized. While slums catch fire and police gain militia status, political power attempts to take over the public for the sake of the private. Ending the party for the sake of silence. Killing the poor for sake of the rich. Ending justice for the sake of order."

With an attendance of approximately eight thousand people (according to the organization) the event had an extensive cultural programming, as well as concerts by artists such as Gabi Amarantos, Emicida, Karina Buhr and the interpreter of the song that inspired the name of this second mobilization, Criolo, who made the performance

of the song a symbolic moment of the event, being accompanied by the thousands of voices that occupied the space<sup>9</sup>.

As a possible symptom of these mobilizations, Russomano came in third place in the first round and did not remain in the dispute. In the second round the winner was Fernando Haddad, the candidate of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party), whose proposals were more in line with the premises of the young people coordinating the events. To this end, it is possible to place “Não Existe Amor em SP” (There is Love in SP) as an episode that would later be connected to the “June Journeys” or the “Brazilian Spring”, the popular rallies that place all around Brazil in 2013, which become one of the most dramatic moments in the country’s social and political contemporary history. The event may be a sort of rehearsal, in the sense that it shares some of the premises that signified the developments of the following year, such as the distinct mobilization of youth, and the use of streets and urban spaces as a form of activism.

Historically, it is important to note that young people were the main characters of the 2013 rallies, especially the ones that were involved in student councils and in organizations that were fighting against the public transportation fare raise, i.e., “Movimento Passe Livre” (Free Fare Movement). Later the repercussions, especially in social media, attracted young people that were not directly involved in these groups, motivating them to take the streets and join the rally, as did other age groups and social segments.

The journeys began in Porto Alegre with students mobilizing against the public transportation fare raise and its precarious conditions. The rallies brought the fare price now fixed at R\$3,05 back to its previous value of R\$2,85. Spawned from the dimension attained by the first event, a wave of dissatisfaction grew and motivated collective actions of resistance in other cities of the country, that were taken by rallies that raised many questions around the country’s political and social situation. The victory on the “twenty cents” issue had major media and social impact, motivating the youth to encompass other issues, such as improvements in education and health, as well as the need for political reform.

The São Paulo protests began on June 3rd, also called forth by the “*Movimento Passe Livre*” (which presents itself as an “autonomous and horizontal social movement, independent, with no political affiliations that fights for free quality public transportation, with no turnstiles or tariffs) with many of the city’s collectives taking part in it. Especially the ones that had been to the previous rallies at Praça Rosa, like Fora do Eixo, which articulated itself around an important communication vector, Mídia N.I.N.J.A., who stood out by airing live transmissions of the popular protests, in 2013, using digital platforms and mobile phones.

These inaugural episodes, very grounded on youth protests the public transportation fare raise, are the starting point of the polysemic, multiform and diverse character that took over the June rallies, embracing other agendas, political affiliations, extending itself throughout the country, prompting strikes of many different labour groups and revealing the deep dissatisfaction of the people with the many instances of power, mainly Congress in general (Antunes, & Braga, 2014). To understand the relevance of this youth participation, it is important to point out that the last time young people took the street in an expressive and national level had been in 1992, when the “Caras Pintadas” (Painted Faces) movement took place, resulting in the impeachment of the, then, President Fernando Collor de Mello<sup>10</sup>. In other words, the present group was formed by people that had not been in the forefront of anything similar, yet.

Through an extensive historical account Antunes and Braga (2014), point out that the initial thread woven by the students in actuality brought visibility to a bigger set of latent and diffused social dissatisfactions, inorganically at first, but that found echo in a Brazil that was suffering from a severe crisis of representation (a notable lack of trust in the traditional political parties), a possible battlefield with the hosting of FIFA’s Confederation and World Cups (a.k.a Cup of the Rebellions [Copa das Rebeliões] where the surroundings of the stadiums, of one of the country’s

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<sup>9</sup> Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNPpDsILttw>

<sup>10</sup> Fernando Collor de Melo was the first president elected in Brazil after the period of the Military Dictatorship, through the direct popular vote of the polls. In 1989 he won the lawsuit against Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, heavily guided by an agenda that promised political renewal (expressed in the construction of his youthful image) while demonizing his opponent’s communist intentions. Involved in episodes of corruption, he was impeached three years later; This process is driven by popular mobilization and especially by young people.

most traditional symbols, became a battle and confrontation ground between the police and the people) and a noisy review of the narrative that been adopted, thus far, of a nation head to become a world economic power.

Another point worth raising, to better understand the circumstances of these rallies, is that they happen within a global context that encompasses social rallies in many countries, motivated by a world crisis in the social and political spheres, in the last decades. In this sense, it is possible to think Brazil's June Journeys are established as a milestone, an explosive reunion of questionings that had been previously materializing through juvenile urban cultural manifestations, such as "Não Existe Amor em SP". On this aspect it is worth to mention Urteaga's (2011) understanding that these mobilizations represent a questioning space in the search for social identities. In face of this context, the youth involved in these mobilizations now has a 'différance', meaning that the construction of their identity will now involve narrative work and the delimitation and demarcation of frontiers, as Hall (2006, p. 106) points out.

## 6. Final considerations

In the present article we set forth to establish a connection between the song "Não Existe Amor em SP", by Brazilian rapper Criolo, and the numerous and diverse crises that have characterized Brazil in the last decade. The vectors of the relationship being: the cultural manifestations of an urban youth in São Paulo's contemporary fabric, spawn from the "Mais amor por favor" graffiti tag, and how the issues risen there somehow molded not only Criolo's creation, but it's transfiguration into a "song that sings the crisis" as suggested by this brief.

This context leads to think about the strength of juvenile cultural expressions against the conservative forces, reflecting, thus, a situation in which there is a juvenile construction of culture (Urteaga, 2011), where the subjects are active rather than passive. So, we are taking into consideration here Hall's (2006) understanding that identities are social constructions, meaning, it is something directly connected to the contextual process of cultural production in the contemporary fabric, banalized by vertices such as consumption, technical and social networks interactions or direct actions guided by a logic related the possibility of subcultural capital.

Moreover, focus was brought to the issue of youth culture and its diverse modulations, specifically in what concerns its participation in collective constructions and how it works as a rite of passage for these young people (Turner, 1977, pp. 36-52), bringing them closer to political and social issues. To this end, in the context of the major disputes amid the democratic and representation crises, as it has been happening in Brazil in the last decade, many times activism and pop culture unite (Street, 2007) as agreeing voices, bringing forth a sort of styling of political manifestations. Be it through the construction of songs such as Criolo's, be it through the graphic expression of graffiti and tags spread throughout the urban spaces, such as "Mais amor por favor" (More Love please) as Rincón (2015) points out:

"Citizenship is a trend now because we are witnessing a crisis of traditional socializing agents (church, family, school); a crisis in the forms of representation (political parties, labor unions, mass-media); a State and Institutional crisis (legislative, judicial, and executive); a capital crisis (market, commerce and industry); a crisis in thought (intellectuals and academy); a crisis in land (environment, hunger issues); a crisis in justice (rising impunity)" (Rincón, 2015, p. 34).

Another relevant issue here concerns affinities (made visible through the text fixated on the walls, through Criolo's song, through the sharing of sociopolitical manifestations), where it is worth to consider Maffesoli (2000, p. 98) understanding that the connection of individuals through common taste allows for an identification of other individuals that share the same interests, making the formation of "tribes" possible. This enables a more concrete perception of the metamorphosis of social ties, paying close attention to the saturation of identity and individualism, and its expressions. It is, also, through the reunion of young people, with common interests and tastes, sharing information, experiences, and affections that the contemporary youth groupings emerged aiming at political resistance in the city of São Paulo.

These young individuals unite motivated by a feeling of group belonging, looking to raise questions, set forth guidelines, and, sometimes, materializations may arise, uniting these sensible collectives, as street art expressions such as graffiti or music expression, such as the song “*Não Existe Amor em SP*”. In the analyzed case the association of both, somehow, either, enabled or had major representation within the manifestation that happened in the political activism key. In this direction Criolo’s song affiliates itself with a long history of Brazilian protest songs. A gallery that has historical and remarkable portraits in the notion of Brazilian Popular Music<sup>11</sup> itself. Testifying to the role music has in catalyzing powers that go way beyond artistic realization.

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<sup>11</sup> For a broader understanding of songs and politics in the Brazilian context, we must first make a historical perspective, especially from the 1960s, where the political conjuncture was established by a military dictatorial coup instituted in the year 1964. The musical production was a great field of struggles during this period, not only through compositions, but also through festivals such as Festival da Canção and other cultural gatherings that worked on developing ideas and symbolisms genuinely representative of Brazilian culture. These clashes are related to a certain ideological construction of Brazil that occurred at the time and relate to cosmopolitan (through Tropicália and in a given dimension, the Jovem Guarda [Young Guard]) and nationalist perspectives (through musicians such as Elis Regina, Sérgio Ricardo, Nara Leão and Chico Buarque, who had combined the simple and modern aesthetics of Bossa Nova to influences from northeastern Brazilian music and "Samba de Morro" and started gradually relating political issues to their compositions), to establish a brief synthesis. Political criticism permeated several other musical moments in the country after the 1970s, mainly in songs related to the genres of rock, funk, and rap, such as: "Que País É Esse" (What kind of country is this?) by Legião Urbana, "Rap da Felicidade" (Happiness Rap) by MCs Cidinho and Doca; and "Hoje Eu Tô Feliz (Matei o Presidente)" (Today I'm Happy (I Killed the President)) of rapper Gabriel O Pensador. The composition was prosecuted by President Fernando Collor de Mello's government, being removed from the radios at the time.

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