

Polyphony of the squares: Sound and Place at Central Public Squares in Belo Horizonte (Brazil)

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Abstract

This article aims to understand and compare the use of sounds and music as a tool to disputing, sharing and lotting space in two squares in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. In order to do so, citizens manipulate sounds and their parameters, such as intensity, frequency and spatiality. We refer to research data collected by Nucleurb/CCNM-UFGM constituted by a set of methodological procedures that involve field observation, sound recording, photographs, field notes and research on archives, gathering and cross analyzing texts, pictures and sounds, in order to grasp the dynamics of conformation of “place” within the urban space.

Keywords: Sonorities, Squares, Urban Space

1. Introduction

A street crier screams constantly, as pedestrians pass by him, advertising a cellphone chip store's services. During his intervals, another street crier asks whether people want to cut their hair or not. On the background, a succession of popular songs are played on a Record store, and groups of friends sitting on benches talk. An informal math teacher tries to sell a DVD in which he teaches how to solve fastly square root problems. The other side of the square, beyond the crossing of two busy avenues, Peruvian musicians prepare their concert, connecting microphones and speakers through cables, as street artists finish their circus presentation.

Later, in the same city, but in a different square, bossa-nova musicians start their set on a permanent stage settled in the sidewalk, just in front of the café that hired their presentation. Though the music fills the space full of tables where costumers drink, eat, talk and date, about 30 metres away the songs are not heard anymore. The bakery on the corner plays a pagode (a very popular kind of samba) CD, radio, or even soap operas on TV. A similar scene can be found on different blocks in the same square, again, the other side of the crossing of two very busy avenues, where duos present a Brazilian popular music repertoire in front of a bar, or Djs play pop and rock songs for a pub's costumers.

As members of the research group 'Nucleurb/CCNN-UFGM' we've been investigating the dynamics of conformation of "place" within the urban space, mainly interested in how the uses of different media converges for such purpose. Currently, the group studies focus on four squares within the centre of Belo Horizonte, one of Brazil's biggest cities. Squares mark points of convergence in the urban fabric. Their cultural, social, economical and political centrality is shown just in everyday life as well as in specific contexts created by civic life like public celebrations, popular demonstrations or musical performances. If those scenes described above seem to confirm what is usually repeated by academic work on the problem of sound in urban space, a thesis that states that the very loud and "crowded" sonority of the city points to a distracted listening and an unawareness to the sound environment, a more close listening to those settings shows that not only "the rainforest demand and favour acute auditory perceptual skills" from which people "developed the kind of ideological and aesthetic scaffolds for these skills that humanize them and provide a coherent cultural framework for their acquisition" (Feld, 1984, 389).

This work highlights two of those squares, *Sete de Setembro* (September the 7th, Brazil's Independence Day), and *Diogo de Vasconcelos*, better known respectively as "Praça Sete"

and “Praça da Savassi”. This paper deals with the problem of identifying and understanding how, in order to take part on these urban conformation processes, sounds are very often manipulated and used as tools by the city inhabitants. Screams, loud or soft sounds, music, positioning of loud speakers among other sound practices are used as affective devices, in which, as De Nora puts it, “actors produce the aesthetic textures of social occasions, situations and action styles” (DeNora, 2004, 111), conforming a repertoire (Faulkner and Becker, 2009), through which people in the streets share, dispute or conquer property of public space. Our field work applies different ways of registering (audio recordings, digital photos, digital videos and written accounts) made during derivative walks through the squares. Taking soundscape (Schafer, 2001) as a methodological technique that allows us to access sound in its materiality, we discuss the way people manipulate its properties (intensity, frequency and spatiality) to produce place. In consequence, people give shape to mobile and transitory – but recurrent – sonic borders and ambiances. That’s what our investigation intends to capture and analyze, adopting a comparative perspective. In order to do so, we, at first, discuss the relations among sound and space, eliciting how the citizens of the city use sonorities as tools to disputing, sharing and lotting space, by manipulating sounds and their parameters, such as intensity, frequency and spatiality. Then, we present and discuss field work made on the two referred squares in Brazil, so we can elicit how these dynamics work in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

2. Sound and place: disputing, sharing and lotting space.

Although sound is usually associated to duration and the constitution of temporalities, spatiality is also a key feature of sonorities. The phenomenologist Don Ihde points that “Insofar as all sounds are also ‘events’, all the sounds are within the first approximation, likely to be considered as ‘moving’” (Ihde, 2007, 53) in order to conclude that if the primary feature of the audible world is temporal; a weaker, but still important, characteristic of audibility is its spatial properties. He, then, explores how we can listen to shapes, surfaces and interiors through listening to sound properties, such as the continuity/discontinuity of a rolling body sonority, the timbre produced by two objects scrubbing into one another, the reverberation

and echo effects. His discussion evidences how those spatialities are heard through temporal variations, showing that “even the division of space and time are not, strictly speaking, primitive experiential significations. Existentially there is a concrete space time that is also a signification of naïve experience in its thematized appearance” (Ihde, 2007, 61).

This interconnection of temporality and spatiality is fundamental for the understanding of place as used space, as some authors have already shown (Tuan, 1983; Certeau, 1994; Santos, 1996)¹. By social practices, that are variable depending on the hours of the day, seasons of the year, among other time spans; citizens inscribe meanings to the urban space, using its material features such as characteristics of the sidewalks, the presence of benches and buildings, etc. The city is also the place where different kinds of people meet and dispute its use and meanings, bringing to front its dimension of both space appropriation and domination, evidenced in the notion of territory (Haesbaert and Lemonad, 2007, 2). All of these dynamics require movement, and as such produce sound. Thus, in this “lived-time-space” (Haesbaert, 2004), not only “sonic materiality operates as ‘micro-epistemologies’, with the echo, the vibration, the rhythmic, for instance, opening up to specific ways of knowing the world” (Labelle, 2010, XXV), but also represents a whole scheme of acting in the world, since we understand sound, supported by Wisnik (1989), as the communication of a movement signal within the environment, as a body that resonates another. And in doing so, “the sound becomes a presence, and as that presence it becomes an essential part of the building’s [or the place’s] infrastructure” (Sterne, 1997, 23).

Tia DeNora, in her book *Music in Everyday Life* maps how people use music to do certain things, one of those being producing “the aesthetic textures of social occasions, situations and action styles” (DeNora, 2000). She then studies how slow or fast music is manipulated in a party where the host wants his guests to dance or talk, or how stores use ambient music as “a means of delineating retail territory, a way to projecting imaginary shoppers on to the aesthetically configured space of the shop floor” (DeNora, 2000, 135). Her argument is that if on the one hand the sound material manipulated by music brings about some affordances, privileging some uses instead of others; on the other hand, music does not do it by itself, it needs the agency of its users so it can produce what it was intended for, or even a contradictory effect.

Faulkner and Becker (2009) have described how different settings where jazz music is performed require not only different repertoires of songs, but also different techniques of playing those songs. In their ethnographic report, they tell us how, in an American Inn in

1. Certeau (1999) inverts the relation among those two terms, understanding space as used place.

New England, “the comfortable, rustic-feeling room, with oak and walnut floor and a large oriental rug, has a warm sound” (Faulkner and Becker, 2009, 10). They also mention the owner’s apprehension with the sound levels (intensity) a trumpet player would produce, disturbing his clients in the dining room. In their proposal of understanding the repertoire in action, as they are practiced by its users, they try to shorthand sound elements involved in the production of music, as event, which congregates “a list of possible tunes to perform, asking another player what he wants to play, deciding (before or during a performance) what to play and when” (Faulkner and Becker, 2009, 194). One of those elements are the performing situations musicians are in, that delineate what the public expects to hear, in terms of what songs and of how they are performed, with the objective of making the music in a certain setting happen.

For our intention in this article, we find it useful to articulate both DeNora’s and Faulkner and Becker’s ideas in order to understand how the city inhabitants use sounds in order to occupy space, being in a disputing, sharing or lotting way. In this tasks citizens use not only certain sounds, but manipulate them, by intertwining sound properties, such as intensity, frequency and spatiality. On an article about Jazz in the City of New Orleans, Sakakeeny, tells us how “Buddy Bolden – widely regarded as the first jazz musician in New Orleans at the turn of the century – (...) would point his trumpet to the heavens and blow loud and ‘hot’, enticing the audience to leave nearby Lincoln Park” (Sakakeeny, 2006, 41), where another musician played a different kind of music. In this example, the musician manipulates the directionality and intensity of his blowing horn in order to make a call. Further in his article, he reports how, during Mardi Gras, brass bands responds to the passage of the Zulu parade underneath a bridge “by blowing their horns as loud as possible, the sound careening off the concrete infrastructure” (Sakakeeny, 2006, 43). In doing so, they manipulate the intensity and the reverberation produced by a specific place to defy social exclusion, since the mentioned overpass was built in the 1960’s to segregate an African section in the town.

On a similar way, we believe that some sound properties are manipulated by people, most of the times, in order to make certain appropriation and domination of the space: disputing space is the tonic when the main parameter of sound manipulated is intensity – the urge of making loud noises is necessary to silence opponents; frequency (both in terms of melodies, or in terms of the period in which a repetition occurs) is mostly used when one wants to share space – since as Lefebvre argues, “for there to be a change, a social group, a class or a caste must intervene by imprinting a rhythm on an era, be it through force or in an insinuating manner” (Lefebvre, 2004, 25) it brings about the potential of entraining and synchronizing different bodies, so sounds accommodate to one another; and spatiality (be

it in the arranging of the position of sound fonts, the reverb of a space, or the direction of the sound) is usually accessed when comes to lot space, inserting in place a fixed, though sometimes ephemeral, border, that states where a certain territory begins and ends – the manipulation of these properties make possible to control the range of a certain sound. We are not arguing, though that those parameters are used only for those tasks, but that they afford those uses that are virtual and need to be accomplished by its users. What we delineated here represent some guidelines, that can be changed according to the situation, to how people access them, and to what other parameters are also in play. As Augoyard and Torgue put it, “as soon as it is perceived contextually, sound is inseparable from an effect, as subtle as it can be, a particular colouration due to collective attitudes and representations or to individual traits” (AugoyardandTorgue, 2011, 11).

3. Sharing and disputing Praça 7

September the 7th Square, also known as Praça 7 is one of the main areas of interest in the city and is an excellent example of some the contradictions present on the modern urban tradition, namely the one that offers up the city only to those few who enjoy the rights of citizenship (Maricato, 2000). It is estimated that every day around 10,000 people travel the square’s streets and sidewalks during peak hours (2:00 pm to 3:15 pm), because it is one of the main traffic articulators for the city. At Christmastime, it is estimated that 800,000 people per day circulate through this place. The space also serves as host to certain bank headquarters and government buildings responsible for issuing official documents such as identification cards and passports. At the same time, various commercial and recreational activities (street trading and services, as well as artistic and circus presentations, for example) can be found in the Seventh of September Square. The Square is also known as a place for criminals to acquire illegal guns and false documents.

During 2003 and 2004 the square was reformed under the argument that it was a dead place, even though it still attracted a large number of people everyday. In order to implement such marginalizing policies, and just before those urban interventions occurred, a series of derogatory news stories about downtown Belo Horizonte were published in the newspapers

and broadcast by media, reinforcing an image of criminality, drug abuse, and prostitution already present in the city's collective imagination. This media campaign contributed to the arguments supporting urban reform that built in the square 4 pedestrian zones, under four different architectural projects, named with four Indian tribes from Minas Gerais (the state where Belo Horizonte is in), that expelled the hawkers that used to work there from its sidewalks. Some urban practices kept occupying the place, though.

We have discussed somewhere else (Franco and Marra, 2008) on how street criers can be heard as sound indicators of the levels of noise and flux of cars and pedestrians in the streets. In Belo Horizonte downtown, we found out that the longer and louder street cries are the more intense is the car flux and the less frequent is pedestrian flux. In Praça 7, with its four pedestrian zones, there are street criers advertising cell phone stores and services such as hair cut and photography for documents. They entrain themselves with the large flux of pedestrians and small number of cars in the middle of the block, emitting their screams in a not so loud fast rhythm. According to the time of the year, they also spread their occupation to the sidewalks close to the crossing of the two busy avenues, up to the corners a block away from the square's center (figure 1).

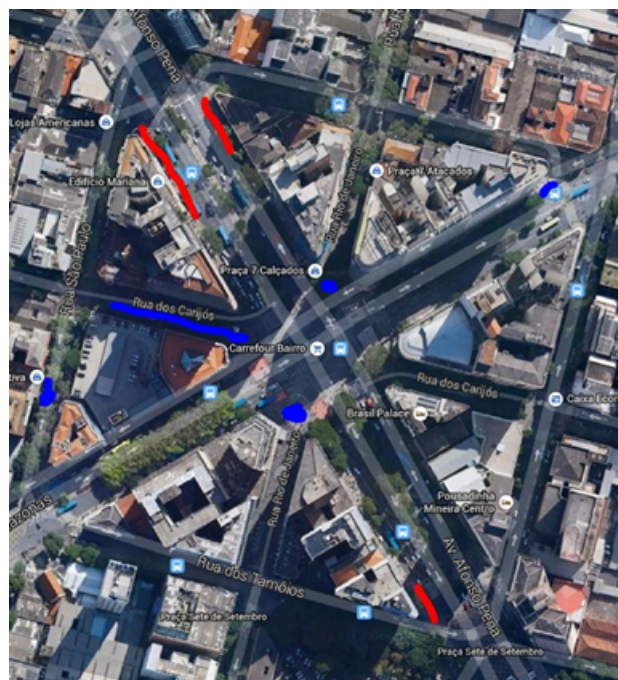


Figure 1. Localization of street criers in Praça 7. In blue, the regions where they usually are. In red regions they can occupy, according to the time of the year.

Sometimes, a math teacher is found in the middle of the street criers, teaching informal lessons on how to solve problems on the subject the easy way. He wears a headset micro-

phone and battery small loudspeakers to amplify his speech, although it also imposes a metallic timbre to his voice. As he speaks continuously, for around 15 minutes, he demonstrates the solutions to his problems on topics such as square roots, financial math, and so on, on a white portable board he carries with him. People stop around the informal class and eventually buy the DVDs he sells with the lessons, organized by subjects, he has just taught. As the teacher speaks, street criers keep their rhythmic screams. A strange kind of collaboration is established between those two categories of informal workers. Now and then, another person arrives the square bringing snacks and drinks for the street criers. They offer the teacher a cup of soda, as he stops his classes to rest his voice. Although informal, both kinds of tasks in fact show a loose structure, as the teacher is also helped by his wife, who brings him new DVDs every time he stops to rest.

If street criers and the math teacher seem at first to compete with each other, they in fact share the acoustic space, so everyone is heard in the noisy ambience of the square. To do so, they manipulate the intensity of their emissions – none of them sound loud – but also the frequency – the number of emissions at a time – of their emissions, as no street crier shouts at the same time and the math teacher takes a break from time to time, not only to rest, but also to talk to the costumers that stop by. This pedestrian “loitering” around the classes also helps the street criers, as they see their chances to be heard grow.

Thus, the sonorities produced in Praça 7 sound alike the “lifting-up-over” Feld found among the Kaluli people. In this style of singing, “even when the situation involves a single voice, the sound is coordinated with the surrounding acoustic features of the environment; this is particularly so when Kaluli sing at work” (Feld, 1984, 393). In a similar way, street criers adjust how often they scream to the frequency of pedestrians passing by. The layered texture of street criers and the math teacher also points to a coordinated vocal polyphony, similar in structure, but in different conditions, to the ceremonial songs sung by the people from Papua New Guinea. Each sound on the square seems to tune in as they embed to one another, manipulated in their frequency and intensity by their users, in order to share space.

Those tune in procedures can be found also on other popular manifestations that take place in the same square. The 7th of September square is also the stage for a number of popular concerts by Brazilian or Peruvian Indians that come about one after the other. Both groups occupy the pedestrian zone with their portable sound equipment and play their songs – the Peruvians usually play global pop songs on their pipes, the Brazilians play what sounds like a mixture of indigenous and popular music. As one group unpacks, the other prepares their presentation, on an unpredictable schedule, since one group or the other can open the sessions, and as they can manage their concerts in two of the four pedestrian zones in the

square (figure 2). Brazilian Indians also use the place as a fair, where they sell craftwork, such as wooden spoons and bowls, necklaces, earrings, etc. The place is also shared with people that present circus numbers and challenges, such as acrobatic and clown performances, riding a defective bike, or kicking a ball in order to make it pass through two empty bottles without hitting none of them – the space between the two bottles is just enough for the ball. All of those people use their voice to announce their work.

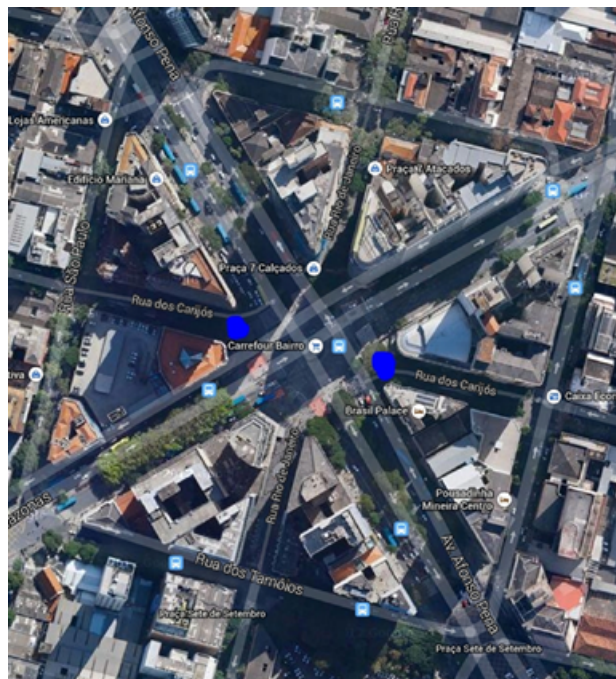


Figure 2. Localization where Peruvian and Indian musical and circus presentation happen.

The 7th of September Square is, as we have already described in this article a very busy and important place to the city, as it concentrates in it and around a large number of bus stops and as it is located in the borders of a popular and a fancier commercial zones. In some of their benches, people remain seated, talking a language full of incomprehensible slangs and carrying bags with different kinds of objects, apparently stolen. The commercial negotiations in the stores turn to negotiations of space in the sidewalk. Once in field work, one of the researchers saw, early in the morning (around 8 a.m) a record store opening while homeless people that use to sleep in the square were waking up (figure 3). The store was playing songs such as boleros, as the homeless people were banging on benches in the rhythm of samba. The insistence of the banging made the store attendants change the record they were playing to a samba one, tuning in with the homeless people who showed satisfaction as they saw their rhythms intertwine with the store's. What was previously “a flow of music

[...] established through song compability and cross-facing so that all transitions from song to song are seamless” (Sterne, 1997, 32) abruptly becomes “handling of spatial difference [...] intimately tied to its handling of social difference” (Sterne, 1997, 41)



Figure 3. Localization of the record store in blue. In red, area where homeless people use to sleep. On the right, picture of the record store facade.

This kind of interaction can also be found on another pedestrian zone in the square, where hippies sell their craftwork: one of the buildings in this block is occupied mainly by stores that sell rock, punk and heavy metal records, but also some instruments, clothes related to those music genres, and skate board equipment as well, also known as Galeria do Rock (figure 4). The sound of the skaters maneuvers and of the small wheels rolling on the sidewalks can also be heard during some hours of the day (usually the late afternoon and early evening) as there are steps, plain and upper areas in the pedestrian zone that can be used as obstacles to the sport practice (figure 5). Tuning in to this “rebellious tonic”, we find the protests that usually take place in this pedestrian zone. They arrive at certain arranged times, usually at noon or late afternoon, around 5 or 6 P.M, with cars equipped with loud speakers that can be heard almost two blocks away, as some recordings the group made in the place show. Here, the loud sound is used as a manifestation of power, defying the sacred noise (Schaeffer, 2001, 114) of the traffic jam, spreading messages by workers on strike, and other social movements in favor of better public transportation, houses for homeless people, etc. In doing so, they manipulate intensity, in order to dispute the square’s space and take possession of it.

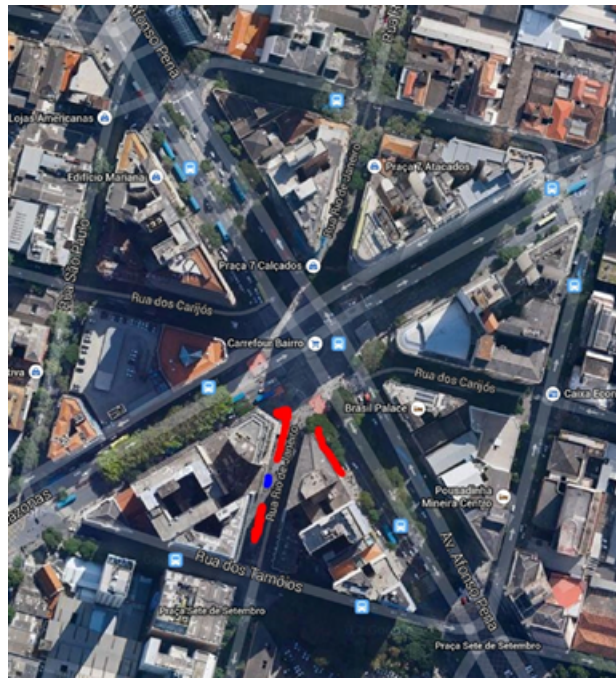


Figure 4. Localization of Galeria do Rock in blue. Localization of hippies selling craftwork in red.



Figure 5. Pedestrian zone in front of Galeria do Rock, with its steps and plain areas. Picture taken from the internet, http://www.arqbh.com.br/2007/04/praa-sete-revitalizacao_2448.html.

Those manifestations, though, don't take long in the square and are usually moved to the front of the city hall. This also happens when big protests burst into the city streets and close the square, causing traffic jams. And during manifestations, street criers don't stop their adverts, although they also become louder. These observations evidence that an-

practice that intends to get fixed in the 7th of September Square in Belo Horizonte has to deal with the sharing of the space. The place is occupied by a great diversity of people and groups, what makes it difficult, most of the times, to conquer it for a long time. The solution for this dilemma is finding ways to live together with the other forms of the occupation of the place. Listening to its sonority is one of the ways to sense its layered polyphony in order to find a gap where you can fit in. Labelle, writing about the Muzak and the ambient music on Shopping Malls, advocates that “introducing ambiguity into the equation, and letting the ear *mishear*, I hope to accentuate background music as one of many auditory experiences through which we still may learn to listen”(Labelle, 2010, 200). In the case of Praça 7, hearing it right is listening to its layered background in order to understand the ambiguity and randomness introduced by the diversity inhabiting the place, so one can insert his own sounds in the square’s sonority.

A last example helps us grasp those dynamics. Every Friday, a restaurant in the pedestrian zone where the skaters train their maneuvers turns into a bar placing tables and chairs in the sidewalk in front of it and serving beer to clients. A musician playing Brazilian Popular Music on guitar and singing establish an ambience for the costumers to talk to each other, as we discussed somewhere else (Garcia and Marra, 2012). The bar, though, does not place tables in the plain area, next to it, where the skaters usually ride their boards. One Friday, Belo Horizonte downtown was busy since people were buying presents for Christmas – it was December the 20th. It was about 7 P.M. when the researchers recorded the musician playing his repertoire. In the background, you can hear the sound of the skateboards hitting the ground, as the skaters tried to jump on it. None of the music, nor the noise of the sport practice made it hard for people sitting on the tables to talk. More than a distracted listening, we believe it was a matter to listen to the background in order to fit each sonority to each practice in space, with its respective mode of hearing. As Eric Wilson wrote about cries in London’s streets, in 17th century, these sonic manifestations “avail a means of negotiating space within a particular economy, without such (romanticized consequences of exile)” (Wilson, 1995, 21).

4. Lotting and negotiating Praça da Savassi

The *Diogo de Vasconcelos* Square, demarcated by the intersection of *Getúlio Vargas* and *Cristóvão Colombo* avenues, is better known as the Savassi Square. At one of its corners, in the early 1940s, there opened up a bakery that received the surname of their owners, the Savassi family, of Italian origin. The *Funcionários* district, eminently of residential character, was changing around this period:

Already in the 1950s, the first trading services have been deployed in the district and its area was the Savassi Bakery at Diogo Vasconcelos Square and, beside it, on Pernambuco St., São Félix Drugstore. There was also a haberdashery, near Diogo Vasconcelos Square and next to the bakery; Colombo e Trinângulo warehouses at *Cristóvão Colombo* Av. Two other services began to attract the attention of the belo-horizontino [Belo Horizonte city dwellers]: the construction of Cine *Pathé* and the first supermarket in Belo Horizonte, the *Serve Bem*, both located in *Cristóvão Colombo* Av. (Lemos, 2007, 7)

In bars, warehouses, and the bakery itself, the middle and upper class youth gathered together. At the surroundings, several public and private schools arose, becoming pathway for passing-by students, from elementary to university. As new neighborhoods appeared in the city South Zone, the Savassi region became a center to which flocked the upper and middle-class in search of sophisticated shops and social spaces corresponding to their preferences. From the 1970s, the transformations in space intensified. Celina B. Lemos points out, in her study on consumption and formation of a centrality in Savassi, the strong presence of private investment following the movement of consumers with high purchasing power, forming a "(...) locus of consumption and leisure of privileged groups" (Lemos, 2007, 8). According to interviews conducted by the author, the "noble consumers" saw the City Downtown as a deteriorated space, unsophisticated and without exclusivity, thereby "(...) growth and legitimization of Savassi coincided with the semi-saturation of the Traditional Center" (Lemos, 2007, 8). Accompanying these changes, development legislation drafted in 1976 regulated the "mixed" use (residential / commercial) within the district.

The consumption activities were articulated to forms of leisure and sociability that matched the expectations of goers in search of refinement and good taste. Not by chance in the 1980s the reemerged the bookstore *Agencia Status* in front of the main bus stop on *Cristóvão Colombo* Av., opposite to which was the Cine *Pathé*, a movie theater by then enshrined as a meeting point for intellectuals, associated with "art movies" where attendees from the neighborhood remember having watched films of directors like Bergman, Fellini

and Godard. Thus, Lemos (2007, 13) considers that there have been a continuity and use transitions between these two points of concentration and gathering on opposite sides of the avenue. Thus, a typical ride of the inhabitant of middle or upper class by Savassi could include shopping, watching a movie, buying a book and ending the evening at one of the bars or restaurants nearby.

The practice of frequenting Savassi's bars was already integrated into the routine of working people on site, as well as people belonging to middle and high extracts that inhabited the South Zone. It is possible, therefore, to "identify frequency patterns" at bars and eateries that were in fashion at Savassi, where outlined a territoriality by means of use, based on the groups and subgroups who frequented the place. (Lemos, 2007, 17-18)

Also on that decade, part of Pernambuco and Antonio de Albuquerque streets (both cross diagonally the space that shapes the square) were turned into pedestrian zones. Flowerbeds with plants and some urban structures such as benches and public telephones (then still as relevant equipment) were built there, and the parts that remained regular streets received parking spaces. If sometimes this space was configured as "pathway", several situations could attract and retain the bystanders, as the presence of street vendors, artisans, artists selling paintings, beggars and even the police, anxious to suppress assaults and control the frequency of individuals considered threatening. As an idyllic space for empowered and enriched groups-in opposition to the social representations of the dirty, outdated, cluttered, filled with "undesirables", Center -Savassi should be an adjusted and comfortable place for its privileged consumers.

We can consider that from 1990 the scene of the square has become more complex and heterogeneous. The large number of bus lines that travels and stops at points of the avenues that intersect it, the existence of some affordable shops and eateries, the diversification of services and eventually its own centrality, significantly increased affluence and variety of people circulating and appropriating the space. It also became a place for further meeting to watch games and celebrate conquests of soccer teams from the state capital. This has not eliminated initiatives that are consistent with the image that was already consolidated about the district. We can mention the fad of "cafes and bookstores," post-modern spaces with retro atmosphere, then perceived as exquisite loci of sociability for groups of certain cultural capital. *Café 3 Corações* and *Livraria da Travessa* became poles of this type of activity, using live music-performed by small groups or even one musician with a repertoire considered of

“good taste” (jazz, MPB², choro³) – to attract and please demanding attendees used to spend more money, even on food.

Sign of the times and changes in cultural consumption habits, *Pathé Cine* would be closed. In its building were to run an evangelical church, a fair of clothes and a parking lot. The building was listed by the Municipal Historical and Cultural Heritage, but plans to recover it as a cultural center haven't left the drawing board yet. In the 2000s, the main corners came to be occupied by stores of multinational mobile operators operating in Brazil, in addition to the one already occupied since the previous decade by a McDonald's franchise, marking the square's insertion to the mass-produced and globalized circuit consumption while there still remained traditional shops at a regional level (Elmo [shoe store]) and local (*Centro Ótico* [eyeglass store]). Significantly, the *Claro's* store dislodged *Café 3 Corações*, which eventually returned to business on a much smaller shop behind the one occupied before, after the support by a campaign moved by traditionalists of the day before yesterday.

The Savassi Square witness in many changes and bumps the maelstrom of our time, and as pointed out by Andreas Huyssen, “Already the globalization fantasies of the 1990s have themselves become part of the memory archive and its cabinet of delusions.” (Huyssen, 2003, 6). Also do not cease to be interesting counterpoints to McDonald's the persistence of snack bars and restaurants serving snacks, cakes and “petiscos” associated with local or eventually regional cuisine, as in the case of the *Baiana do Acarajé*. Huyssen, proposes the city should be read as a palimpsest, calls attention to the nature of the changes brought about by globalization in the cityspace:

(...) national traditions and historical pasts are increasingly deprived of their political e geographical groundings, which are reorganized in the process of cultural globalization. This may mean that these groundings are written over, erased, and forgotten, as the defenders of local heritage and national authenticity lament. Or it may mean that they are being renegotiated in the clash between globalizing forces and new productions and practices of local cultures. (Huyssen, 2003, 4)

2. MPB is a trend in post-Bossa Nova urban Brazilian popular music. It is not a distinct genre but rather a combination of original songwriting and updated versions of traditional Brazilian urban music styles like samba and samba-canção with contemporary influences, like folk, rock, pop and jazz.

3. A Brazilian popular music genre, mainly instrumental, which emerged in Rio de Janeiro in the mid nineteenth century.

The last refurbishment was carried out between March 2011 and May 2012, and have cost, according to information by the Municipality of Belo Horizonte (PBH) gathered by the press, between R\$ [reais]10.4 and 11.8 million [US\$ 4,6 to 5,2 million]⁴. It became part of the mayor election campaign⁵ agenda by requested from local merchants through an alarmed rhetoric that pointed the danger of loss of the distinctive features of the square and the neighborhood. The most obvious physical changes were the creation of pedestrian zones, lifting the *Getúlio Vargas* and *Cristóvão Colombo* avenues tracks, the construction of light sources, benches (over the pedestrian zones and their edges), and changes in the gardens and lighting. The recent intervention signals the attempt to adjust the face of the square to a “gentrified” project. However, if the regulatory standards for the appearance of shops, the installation of standardized street furniture in the zones, added to the increasing of establishments’ operational costs signals the intention of selecting socially the public to attend it, “undesirable” groups still mark their presence, indicating a dispute, albeit unevenly, for the square space.

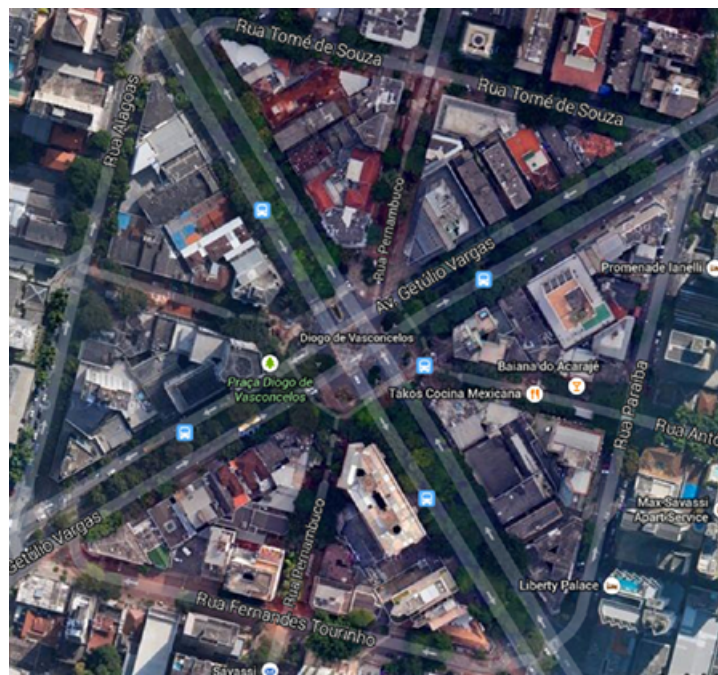


Figure 6. Google Maps view of Praça da Savassi.

4. NOVA Praça da Savassi é inaugurada em Belo Horizonte. Portal G1. 10/05/2012; HEMERSON, Landercy; HOLANDA, Tiago de. Revitalização: enfim, a Savassi ficou pronta. Estado de Minas (on line), 09/05/2012. Access on May 29, 2014.

5. The current mayor, Márcio Lacerda, was reelected in 2011 for another term from 2012 to 2015.

The square refurbishment took part of the dividing space of by modifying it, closing streets and setting new street furniture. However, the proposed structures are also appropriated in ways beyond the project.

I gaze at the stone bench, at the edge of the block. These structures deserve attention. This space is usually occupied by youngsters, pickers, homeless, beggars eventually. Sometimes they approach McDonald's and address other bystanders. There are no explicit conflictive situations, but it is literally as if there was an invisible "force field", and many bystanders end up avoiding the edge.⁶

This is the context in which our current research is been conducted. Our fieldworks at Savassi Square were performed in a period between May 2013 and May 2014. Using audio recorders, smartphones and notebooks, we made sound recordings, videos, photographs and notes. Although cut by two avenues with heavy traffic during peak hours, besides its proximity to another very busy avenue of the capital (*Contorno Av.*), at Savassi Square we may hear violin players indifferent to cars, the noisy atmosphere of the bars, and live music which has become a landmark.

The walks we conducted aimed to capture the production and organization of space and soundscape from parameters such as intensity, frequency, and spatiality. Each pedestrian zone has its own configuration, and is conditioned by their daily routine activities and uses performed by anyone who lives, works or passes through them. Mornings are all in relative silence until the stores and other places start to open at around 9 am. Throughout the day we watch the movement and the profusion of sounds increase by the lunch period and then decrease slightly in the afternoon until closing time at around 18 hours. At night, all week, especially Thursday through Saturday, there is intense movement of customers in bars, especially concentrated in the blocks from *Pernambuco St.* to the corner with *Tomé de Souza St.* and *Antonio de Albuquerque St.* to *Paraíba St.* In the pedestrian zone from *Pernambuco St.* to the corner with *Fernandes Tourinho St.* is the *Ateliê*, café and restaurant that usually has musical performances nightly but not as busy as the schedule it had at the time it was the *Livraria da Travessa*. An account of these type of hiking is like the following:

I walk to the pedestrian zone where is *Elmo* (*Pernambuco St.*). A violinist plays right in front of the traditional shoe store, which exists a long time in Savassi. It

6. GARCIA, Luiz H. A. Relato de campo. Praça da Savassi. Belo Horizonte, 18 de março de 2014. 1p.

is a classical repertoire, recognizable pieces, such that you can hear on the radio or even commercials. I made a short film. Not a lot of people paying attention to the musician. The movement is already low (compared to the larger influx of people on the avenues whose intersection marks the square) and decreases. Few people are sitting in the border's stone benches and also few staying in other edge of the pedestrian zone (Fernades Tourinho St.). I believe that the design of these benches within the zones does not favor long stays. The stone benches, especially under the shadows are much more inviting. The tables of the *Ateliê* are sparsely occupied. Here, as in *Café 3 Corações* people come together to work with notebooks open on the tables. I listen to music from the café sound-system, however badly, a song by Chico Buarque. It plays *Ensaio Geral* and then *As Vit-rines* - which are remarkable songs that refer directly to the urban space.⁷

On many occasions we have followed a specific roadmap out of *Paraíba* street, inside the pedestrian zone toward *Getúlio Vargas Av.*, crossing to *Pernambuco St.* to the corner with *Tomé de Souza*. That route makes possible to see how bars and cafes use the placement of speakers to provoke certain kinds of ambiances. Their position at the top creates environments for conversation that does not conflict with the space of neighboring property. In bars where the boxes are on the floor, the sound is louder, causing the need to increase the intensity of the conversation. Those sound dynamics resemble the ones found by Sterne (1997) in the Mall of America, regarding the position of loudspeakers as strategies for differentiating inside and outside of stores, and its surroundings as well, but in a more strategic fashion: this more overt sonic interference (an attempt to transform the street in nightclub?) indicates the intention of marking an almost institutionalized division of the sidewalk space. This demarcation also makes use of musical preferences associated with the public profile that bars attract and to which they seek to identify by the menu, the decor and the forms of sociability they promote. So we have a repertoire of hard rock playing nonstop in *Vintage pub*, meeting point for aficionados motorcycles, and pulsating music and DJs playing in the *Anos80*, with constant references to the repertoire of the new wave decade the appears on the bar's naming.

In live performances we can determine that prevalent musical genres are rock, bossa nova repertoire and voice and guitar of typical MPB mingled with jazzy, bluesy songs, or pop flavor. In the *Ateliê*, a duo with singer (voice + guitar) and instrumentalist (bass) presents

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weekly, whose repertoire according to its own set includes MPB, Pop, Xote, etc., including a “proper garb” (arrangements of authorship of the duo). In Status, rock bands predominate, but there also occurs jazz ensembles, including important instrumentalists around the local scene, with singers and crooners with basic bossa-nova repertoire with a few strokes of MPB. It is noteworthy that the stage shows are strategically located so that a presentation does not compete with another. When a presentation with greater intensity happens in the biggest stages that are mounted closer to the avenues, the shows are synchronized and the other musicians keep waiting for the end of the noisier spectacle.

It should be noted that the pedestrian zones provide a proper acoustic as they configure gaps between two rows of buildings that, while not high, act as walls. The bars or cafes that promote live music performances take advantage of this architecture in the blocks, positioning improvised stages and musicians’ sound equipments with their backs to the avenues and facing the interior of the closed streets, where their tables and folding chairs are positioned. This is what happens at the *Ateliê* (where previously was the *Livraria da Travessa*) and *Café 3 Corações*. The former *Agência Status - Status Café, Cultura e Arte* in the 2000s - took a different and very effective solution, installing a stage under the awning of the building in which McDonald’s operates. This strategy points to an extension of the emporium’s space onto the street, while performing an allotment of this public space. We realize, on one side, an effort to demarcate the boundaries of the property and mark out the profile of the public who sit at their tables to eat while chatting and listening to music, and, at the other side, a number of practices which challenge or attempt to adapt to the imposed boundaries. The Status case seems particularly significant:

Overt partitions actually reinforce the division that somehow already operates in the pedestrian zone of Status and McDonald’s. The poor boys, scavengers, homeless, hippies and beggars stayed at the border, although sometimes ventured to pass between the tables and people were standing in the area bounded by them in front of the bars, usually to ask for money or picking cans. One of them interacted with me, a man carrying a bag in the back, but that was picking nothing. He drank a beer and offered to put some in my glass, but this had little *churros* I had bought at *Fujiyama*, on the next corner. I offered and he accepted one, we exchanged smiles, and he went through the midst of the people. At another point, while one of the bands (Nelson e os Besouros, a Beatles tribute band) played *Twist and Shout*, a teenager passed me by, barefoot, dirty and rag-

ged, trying to follow the song singing a “fake English” as the one used by street car washers “ otcheiquirobeibe, pissensau ...” and stuff like that.⁸

The activity of picking cans marks a liminality there, in that both cans are the rest of the consumption of bar costumers and livelihood of pickers. The ‘fake English’ in turn represents a marker of difference. Appadurai (1996, 178) asks “what locality might mean in a situation where the nation-state faces particular sorts of transnational destabilization”. As he proposes, we wish to use locality as a relational and contextual category, “(...) constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts” (Appadurai, 1996, 178). Although he speaks of several situations approached by the ethnographic record that can be rewritten and reread as concerned with the production of local subjects (Appadurai, 1996, 179), we wish to underline those concerned with the spatial production of locality.

The appropriation by the young man who passed by me demarcates the tension between globalized English that circulates through a lot of songs conveyed by cultural industry and its “localized” form that keeps the sound but imposes a Brazilianized diction. Singing it that way the boy manages to point out that he finds away to integrate the global flow of which the song participates, while at the same time he is devoid of the cultural and social capital that would enable him to study English regularly to appropriate precisely the words he is singing.

It is possible, without being a customer, to follow the shows sitting in the other stores (some have a more affordable menu), on the fixed seats added after the refurbishment of the square, or even on foot. It is also interesting to note the different behaviors of those who are sitting in bars in which the musicians are playing. Generally the first two lines are seated facing the stage, as an effective audience, while the rest seats with their back or side to the stage, basically maintaining an attitude of indifference, except on ends of the numbers when some also clap mechanically.

(...) Dudes, sitting in the Status table just in front of the stage, after splurge on food and drink, which are not cheap there, questioned the waiter about the *couvert* charge, for he had just notified them that they should pay R\$ 20.00 *per person*. They claimed that they had not been informed and that they expected to pay 20 for the whole table. And retorted that Aggeu [musician and responsible for organizing the event] had just flaunt the microphone that the event had no sponsorship and the bands would not receive *cache*. Apart from the fact that

8. GARCIA, Luiz H. A. Relato de campo. Praça da Savassi. Belo Horizonte, 14 de dezembro de 2013. 1p.

many are unaware of the mechanism of extortion behind *couvert* charges (the musicians do not receive all of it), it is a sad fact that the majority does not dispute the exorbitant price of food for the body, but is always willing to complain too much about the price of food for the soul⁹

In one of the last field works we observed different behavior from a homeless man who, standing right next to the stage, accompanied with the body a trio (bass, drums, keyboard) performance, playing himself alternately an imaginary keyboard or guitar in the air¹⁰. Clearly in his own world apart, no one molested him, probably because, somehow, he penetrated the partition without making his presence uncomfortable. But the “undesirables” can trigger conflict. We recorded an interesting and revealing episode at April 16th, 2014, when South Americans¹¹ strolling musicians, advanced to the fenced area of Status and played near some tables. They got some applause of those nearby them. “After the ending of their presentation the waiter comes and talks. By his gestures I deduce he is commanding the musicians not to play here anymore.”¹². A few days before they had played on stage, but it is possible that such ‘exotic’ attraction was not being considered for other presentations.

5. Conclusions

We have shown how the use of sound by the city’s inhabitants delineate different sound practices used to share, dispute and lot spaces in two squares in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. To do so, they manipulate sounds and its properties, such as intensity, frequency and spatiality, negotiating place. Further work should be spent, on comparing the cites squares, trying to elicit how musical and sonic repertoire is enacted, by choosing songs played by musicians, djs and stores, by manipulating intensity to conquer space, by entraining to the sonority of the place to find room for one’s own sounds, and by strategically placing speakers to build invisible, but stable borders in place.

9. GARCIA, Luiz H. A. Relato de campo. Praça da Savassi. Belo Horizonte, 14 de dezembro de 2013. 1p.

10. GARCIA, Luiz H. A. Relato de campo. Praça da Savassi. Belo Horizonte, 20 de maio de 2014.

11. As the World Cup approaches, their presence is increasing as the city is going to host same games.

12. GARCIA, Luiz H. A. Relato de campo. Praça da Savassi. Belo Horizonte, 16 de abril de 2014, 1p.

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