



(Re)Adapting to Resist: The Case of Brazil's Urban Quilombo Aparelha Luzia

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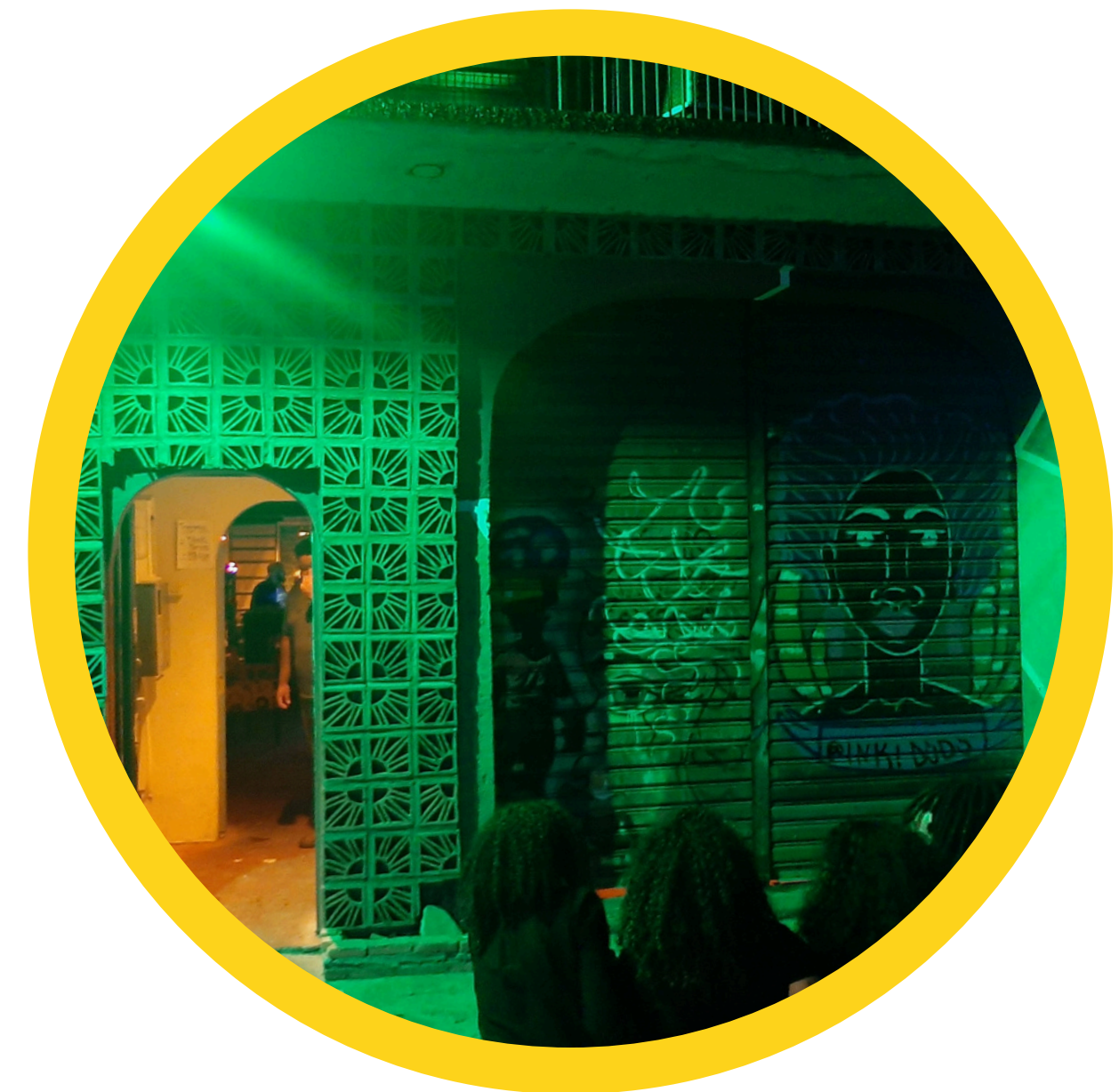
Abstract

This master thesis discusses a contemporary phenomena in Brazil: the creation of self titled urban *quilombos*. If in the past, the *quilombos* were created by enslaved black people to resist against slavery, currently they were readapted to resist a structurally racist society.

In this process, the urban *quilombo* Aparelha Luzia, located in the center of São Paulo, quickly gained notoriety for Afro-Brazilians, be it for its distinctiveness, be it for the success of its founder, Erica Malunginho, in the political sphere.

Applying Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory to an (auto)ethnographic study of Aparelha Luzia, through qualitative interviews and field visits, we experienced what it is to be at Aparelha Luzia's activities and apprehended different ways of cultural reshapings of identity.

In this case, Aparelha Luzia provides an opportunity for Afro-Brazilians to return to their past, even if it's a past that is somewhat idealized. By retracing these roots, one is enabled to reconstruct their own cultural identities and find their own routes towards an Afro-Brazilian identity.



Aparelha Luzia's entrance

Main Findings

The Brazilian history is not a happy one for Afro-Brazilians, after all, this history started with enslaved Africans that had to go through a forced diaspora, an inhumane transatlantic crossing over three centuries of slavery. Within this period, enslaved Africans were the country's major workforce, at the same time that due to their status as properties, little to no monetary gain was achieved. To resist this punishing and oppressive institution of slavery, many forms of resistance came to life, including the *quilombos*, where fled slaves occupied non-populated areas and readapted to these surroundings by creating alternative societies, reaffirming their African cultural values (Carneiro, 1958; Munanga, 1996).

By bridging the gap of how Afro-Brazilians came to be and giving them a platform towards what they will become, we understand that Aparelha Luzia helps them (re)shape their cultural identities through different processes of (re)identification, namely by having a contact with: an Afro-Brazilian **majority** and **diversity**; **traditions** and **adaptations**; **music**; **education** and **political articulation**.

We were also able to identify some questions for future studies, such as: "is there a limit in this Afro-Brazilian diversity?"; "what are the impacts in the cultural identities of Africans that visit Aparelha Luzia?"; "how will this political articulation come into play?"

Nevertheless, we can conclude that, in the words of its Afro-Brazilian attendees, Aparelha provides them a space where they feel **welcomed**, **re-energized**, **reconnected** and **belonging**, which is an experience that they do not have elsewhere, providing them with new ways of becoming themselves. As Beatriz Nascimento (2018, p. 190) defines, the quilombo is "**a possibility in the days of destruction**".

Ilu Inã's performance at
Aparelha Luzia

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