Beagle II Journey of Discovery: Mapping Music and Lapa

Below is a compilation of reflections written down in July of 2011 about Lapa and life in Rio de Janeiro. What one finds is less of a controlled experiment and more of a multi-dimensional inquiry into a broad question, that of social integration and separation in a musical city. Going on a “journey of discovery” blurs the line between that which is personal and the academic. It includes many of the digressions, tangential and incidental questions that came up through the process that began with one initial question. Looking back, editing and adding to these reflections has been very enjoyable because I am able to relive, in a way, my experience this summer in Brazil.

6/27/11

The purpose of this project is to think about three things: music, social class and space. Like in Dubai, I am thinking about and looking at how different urban configurations affect aesthetics and social life. Although I have not been able to find cheap recording devices, I am straining to think more and more I should try to apply the Dubai model in Lapa and in Rio by using disposable cameras. I am using music as a method, as a language that I can use here with particular fluency, both technical and conversational, which will give me greater insight into social issues that may not be so easy to talk about explicitly. As I have been meeting with Brazilians in São Paulo in these initial days, I have been getting better and better at explaining what it is that I'm doing here, especially in a few days when I go to Lapa. In São Paulo I feel like
I am exploring more, trying to see different neighborhoods and looking at it with the eyes of a, well - tourist - in a certain way. This is something I hadn't done before since I usually stayed within a closed circuit of family and friends, a familiar circuit of streets, shopping malls, and country clubs. This in itself leads to interesting observations about the configuration of the city and the diverging experiences of the city from a spatial perspective.

Today I wanted to go to the museum of the Portuguese Language by Estação da Luz, right in front of the Pinacoteca, which is another great museum, but of course they were both closed since today is a Monday. I should have known better, but it turned out fine because I just walked around the perimeter of the Parque da Luz, which was also closed, and wandered around the former Jewish neighborhood of Bom Retiro. It's now mainly an Asian neighborhood, with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants as far as I know. It is also the center of the textiles industry, where one can buy relatively inexpensive and good quality clothes. I didn't see many big brands there, like in the shopping malls; instead I saw what looked like a host of private businesses and a vibrant atmosphere. The shift of this neighborhood's population makes me think of the dynamic nature of space and how careful I will need to be to account for that when making a visualization. This will be a great challenge, especially given that Lapa is a place that can change significantly from night to night (and of course between day and night).

Walking around Parque da Luz I thought to myself what a wonderful opportunity this is, to have a fully funded two months to do what I want to do: listen to music, travel, read, and write. At least for a couple of months I can try to experience that extreme kind of freedom that is both a luxury and a weight. You want to do something great, but you feel small or lazy for not being at work like everyone else. But I'm over that for now, I have too much to look forward to and if I keep writing often, maybe something interesting will come out of it. Or maybe if I stop
just worrying about forcing myself to write something interesting, something meaningful will come out. We’ll see.

6/29/11

Writing about music, John Cage said, is analogous to dancing about architecture. It's very complicated, because music transmits thoughts, feelings, and emotions that cannot be fully or justly captured solely by written language. Therefore I will try to think of music in a specific way here and try to write about it in a more narrow sense. Jazz musician Vijay Iyer said in a recent interview about the music industry that he likes to think of music as not simply a product, a commodity, but an action. That action has significant consequences, bringing people together, forming communities, as well as furthering personal enrichment of the listeners and participants. So that is one narrow way that I want to describe music here. Like Iyer, I am not so interested in marketability of a certain genre, although that is related to any study of the audience. However, I will privilege the community building aspect of the music, the actual experience of listening to music in a certain place, such as Lapa and other places throughout Brazil. How do those places act upon the people who are there? How does the music transform the place? I am aware that these are broad questions, but I think they will help clarify what I mean when I'm saying that I want to study Brazilian racial and class divisions through 'the lens of music'.

This is part of a broader epistemological debate on the notion of agency. The return to ontologies by thinkers such as Hodder, Latour, and (earlier) Deleuze represents an effort to decenter the human from the anthropocentric theories that have dominated the humanities for a long time. But how much so do they dominate? I was just looking at the world heritage program
on the Unesco website, and they included biodiversity as part of universal heritage, citing the fact that human life is inextricably linked with larger ecological processes and that it does not exist independently of them. However, despite some signs of new ideas such as the latter, Unesco remains fundamentally entrenched in an anthropocentric mold given that the first criterion to be fulfilled in order for something to be considered part of world heritage is "to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;". This is representative of a general state of mind we find in the discourse of not just Unesco, but most major political institutions today; despite efforts to look ‘sustainable’, we still have a difficult time reforming institutions on a new basis of what is a human.

6/26/11

How are São Paulo and Rio different? For one, the spatial dimension of social stratification is much more important in São Paulo. Rio is characterized by a real mixture of different groups and social classes (the favela Rocinha next to the high-end neighborhood Leblon). In São Paulo, Renato's friend Victor told me, the places that have diverse musical scenes like Rua Augusta and Avenida Paulista are diverse in "tribes", not social classes. By tribes Victor meant groups like Emos, gays, metalheads, any kind of subgroup that does not amount to different social classes. In Rio, we have a place like Lapa, where people from different social groups that go beyond subgroups - we are talking about classes - go out to listen to music and have a good time. In São Paulo, the sheer size of the city and the layout clearly separates the wealthy neighborhoods from the favelas, whereas in Rio the two are interspersed throughout the metropolitan area. This is something I've heard through a number of years as common knowledge about the differences between São Paulo and Rio, and it is clear upon first glance that
the favelas and the wealthy neighborhoods are much closer to each other in Rio. But at the same
Rio does have an important North-South divide, Zona Norte and Zone Sul, which respectively
divide the mass of wealthy areas from many of the slums. Lapa's location between these two
masses, combined with Rio's already interspersed configuration, may be some of the factors that
make Lapa such a magnet for diverse groups of people and forms of expression.

6/28/11

The metro can be looked at as a space that brings diverse groups of people together. Today I traveled for a couple of hours in the metro in São Paulo during peak hours. During rush hour you see people from various social classes and skin colors doing the same thing, going from work back to their homes. In the end all of these people work and commute and that provides a common denominator for their relations in that space. However, social interaction - conversation, communication - is pretty scarce. Moreover, in terms of diversity, the middle class did predominate, you don't see many people who could afford the comfort of their own car as opposed to the packed metro (or people who are unemployed, beggars, and those who can't afford to take public transportation).

It will be interesting to look at Lapa as a space of social equality different than the metro because the common denominator in that point is leisure, not work. Perhaps this encompasses a wider array of people. Most importantly, it provides an open setting that allows for creative expression, which is the opposite of the intimidating, crowded, and sometimes oppressive metro commute.
The last night of June I went to a samba place with my cousins in Vila Madalena called “Ó do Borogodó”, which a website describes as the reincarnation of Lapa in São Paulo. The musicians were excellent, and the place got pretty full past eleven and many people were dancing. It was a chilled out samba that couples could dance to, and it seemed like the crowd was mostly from a middle-upper class background. I spotted some Americans right next to me, a young guy wearing a black Nirvana shirt who stood out with his blond hair. The girl he was with was a Paulista from Morumbi. The decoration made the place look slightly gritty but not decrepit. You could see paint chipping, bricks on the wall, bare wooden tables and simple wooden fold-up chairs. A few nights before I had gone to a cervejaria with some parents’ friends where we had beer that was made there, salad, mandioca, and picanha to top it off. There was a duo playing jazz and boss using a keyboard with a fender rhodes sound and a stand up bass keeping the groove. They played a lot of standards, some João Donato, maybe some Jobim. This was a new, trendy restaurant and it was interesting to see how some aspects of the decoration, the paint chipping on the walls, the slightly unkempt look in strategic places to make you feel like it's a more laid-back place, all of these things mirrored that Lapa aesthetic whether they were directly imitating it like in Borogodó or just trying to be trendy. Most likely what is happening is that there is a convergence between the two.
But last night, going to Lapa I need to recount in more detail because I went to some key places: TribOz and Carioca da Gema.

Leaving Copacabana, I wrote the address of TribOz on a piece of paper and showed it to the cab driver, who pretended to know where it was. Passing by a part of Rua da Lapa lined with transvestites, we arrived at a small dark side street called Rua Visconde de Lages.

In TribOz I found an older, mostly white crowd, cosmopolitan, Australian owner, world ‘fusion’ cuisine. the music ranged from Jobim to Cole Porter to Ray Charles. The crowd was especially responsive to the American tunes. The owner invited me to come to a jam session on Thursday. I sat in the back by the bar between a middle-aged woman and an older retired guy wearing a navy blue suit jacket and a collar shirt. He looked distinguished with his white beard, holding a wine glass and reacting to the tunes the band played. After the first set ended I began a conversation with him and the bar tender. The bar tender was a literature student at one of the top universities in Rio. Soon I got to talking about Lapa with Paulo. He liked the music, but preferred the messier side of Lapa. The musicians here in TribOz were good, trained jazz musicians, but the environment somewhat sterile. Paulo is a retired engineer who lives in Lagoa, one of Rio’s most elegant neighborhoods. He did not like his former career because he did not like most engineers. Visibly proud of Rio's diversity, he emphasized “o Rio é um dos lugares com o maior acervo musical”/ “Rio is one of the places with the largest musical archive”. Hearing about my interest in Brazilian music, he gave me his explanation for its richness in the country’s diversity: “os Africanos que trouxeram o ‘foda-se’, a alegria”/ “it was the Africans who brought the ‘fuck it’, the happiness”, Portuguese music on the other hand, is beautiful but melancholic. This combination of sentiments and expressions is a common explanation for the creation of popular Brazilian music, and Paulo expressed this quite eloquently.
He had many interesting things to say about Rio, especially about Lapa, a neighborhood he had been going to for decades. Like many other people I interviewed, Paulo recalled Lapa a few decades ago as a dreary place. On Mem de Sá, the main drag, few bars stayed open late except for a restaurant called Nova Capela. Prostitution was much more rampant (though it is still very much a visible part of nightlife). Lapa was virtually dead for decades until its gradual revival in the late 90’s but mainly in the last 10 years.

We got out of TribOz and headed to Carioca da Gema upon his suggestion. That night Teresa Cristina, “the queen of Lapa”, was singing, accompanied by a group that according to Paulo was all from Nova Isabela, in Zona Norte. The crowd was different; much younger, racially diverse, and well-off. “Carioca da Gema” means the “True Carioca” (Carioca being a native of Rio), but the expensive cover fee and prices in the bar limited the diversity one would find. It is clear that this place along with several others on Rua Mem de Sá were prohibitively expensive for a good part of the population in Lapa.

Today, when I was on the bus back from waking up in Santa Teresa, Mariana next to me quietly listening to her headphones, the girl next to us who must have been about our age or a little older, blond, fashionably dressed, made the sign of the cross when we passed one of the main churches on the road. I don't know why but that impressed me a little, I thought, “wow, Brazil is still very catholic”, it permeates many parts of society. Maybe it was a naive preconception I had, but I didn't immediately associate someone who looked like that girl with someone who I would consider very religious.

7/5/11
Meeting Paulo César provided a lot of encouragement as I discussed my project and its goals. Excitedly, he pointed out that there is virtually nothing written on Lapa, on the place itself. I will put as a reminder here that I need to justify why I am writing about the place itself. Most writing about Lapa happens through its various figures, and now I have a whole list of them thanks to Paulo César, who is a close friend of Marília. Paulo César introduced me to Bruno, a French guy married to a Brazilian woman named Jane. Bruno works as a documentary filmmaker in São Gonçalo, a lower income community in Niterói where he and Jane live, and they invited me to spend sometime there and get to know a real ‘comunidade’.

7/6/11

It's hard to write everyday when so much is going on at the same time but I need to write down here about seeing Edu Lobo tonight backed up by an orchestra. The orchestra was made of members of the OSB (Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira) who were kicked out recently because of some political maneuvering that has been heavily criticized. They banded together to form “A Orquestra dos Demitidos” (“The Orchestra of the Dispensed), and with the help of stars like Edu Lobo, they are surviving after leaving their jobs.

To be honest I didn't know that much of Edu's repertoire but I knew enough to follow a few songs and really enjoy the show, his style, the arrangements, and the response from the audience. This was a show deep in the Zona Sul, and by that I mean that it was right under the Leblon shopping mall (possibly the most expensive in Rio). You could see the audience was mostly an older, very elegant crowd, but there were also families and some younger people. The
bulk of the audience, I got the sense, was from the Bossa Nova generation; upper middle class educated Brazilians who grew listening to MPB, and this was a prime example of what Brazilians call “musica de qualidade”, or “quality music”. Edu is known for composing songs that were very jazzy and yet very Brazilian at the same time. He is from the south, but the rhythms ranged from samba to baião to frevo, and of course, he was at his best in his ballads. It was great to see the orchestra interacting with the quartet. At one point, the drummer's jazzy way of playing drew the attention of the bass section of the orchestra who looked at him curiously and admiringly. I wondered what went through their heads at that point. It must be interesting for classical musicians to see a jazz drummer such as the one tonight, who kept the beat and followed a given chart but felt so free and loose, changing the emphasis and adding so much spice to his constantly changing beat. They were obviously very impressed.

But Edu's compositions were a prime example of “musica de qualidade”/”quality music” not just because it combined jazz with Brazilian rhythms, though that is part of it. Edu is a composer of canções, songs that are supposed to be sung and whose lyrics are of utmost importance. A great number of them were composed with Chico Buarque. He sang very clearly, each word he said was fully articulated. When he did an encore he asked the audience to sing along with him. Everyone knew the lyrics, and importantly, knew how to sing it on key. I recorded it on my phone because I think that's something really important about the canção: it marked generations; the words in these songs are still remembered and sung and memorized. It's part of an oral heritage that is very rich and varied. It's poetry that enters the daily lives of millions of people. I find that fascinating. Where else could you say that happens in the same way? Yes, lyrics of famous songs are remembered, but what Edu sang tonight was not formulaic
or easily digestible, it takes many times listening and privileging of the words to reach this level of collective intimate knowledge. It’s something very intense and beautiful.

7/7/11

The Cariocas were going crazy today because of the cold. It must have been in the low 60s with some rain in the morning. On my way to the Museum of Modern Art I met an “artsy” Lapa resident who had moved from Brasília a few years earlier. She recommended Plano B, which is one of her favorite places to go because they play the "weirdest", most interesting, alternative music. I talked a little bit about Lapa, the diversity, and what interests me about it. Her response was interesting. She said something like, "é, no começo quando eu cheguei aqui fiquei maravilhada com toda essa diversidade e toda aquela bagunça, mas depois tomei conta que aquele negócio fede as vezes"/ “yeah, in the beginning when I moved here I was amazed by the diversity and the mess, but later I realized the the place stinks sometimes”. This is coming from someone who is not from Rio but whose vision of Lapa gradually changed. However, she does appreciate the dose of national culture she was able to get by living in Rio. In Brasilia, when Chico Buarque would come for a concert it would cost about 300R$, so it was impossible to get to really know the national culture so well, there were less small places, botecos (dive bars), where this kind of music that is considered “national” music would be played. I'm guessing that by national she means samba and MPB.

7/8/11

Ney Matogrosso - performace, poetry, ancient and actual, elba ramalho
Going to Circo Voador to see Ney Matogrosso was a reminder of the continual presence of the past, of history, in today’s Lapa. Ney played a repertoire that included many songs from the 30s and 40s, but he updated them in his arrangements and especially in his theatrical interpretations. Talking to him backstage after the concert, he emphasized how important it is to transmit that to future generations - what surprised me was how receptive and enthusiastic the audience was about these songs that are considered so ‘traditional’. There is a lot of nostalgia in Lapa; the restored and repainted facades, the vendors selling “Tom Jobim” style hats stacked on top of each other, and the resonance of old Brazilian music in the air.

7/9/11

Interiors and Exteriors

"The arcade is the place of encounter, of gatherings and of jouissance, and Lefebvre comments that the contrast between the pleasures and desires of the arcade and the functional and divided spaces in the streets must have inspired the surrealists" (11, Writings on Cities, Henri Lefebvre).
One of the things I envision this project accomplishing in the end is to combine photos and audio and ethnographic qualitative data to create a concept map of Lapa. Lapa is miscegenation, but it is also separation, the various 'tribes' that make up the whole. Last night, as I walked with Paulo César around a couple of blocks in Lapa we passed by bar Semente on Rua Joaquim Silva there was a sudden change. The street was narrow and crowded, graffiti and murals covered the walls, the sounds turned from mostly samba and rock to funk and hip-hop. After we got out Paulo César seemed relieved and even mentioned that he felt a kind of tension in those couple of blocks. That's what's amazing about this place. It can feel very comfortable for a while, but depending on where you come from, it can quickly feel different, unknown, and unsafe in some parts.

I keep asking myself, as I write and reflect about this place - why am I doing this? Why is this important to me? I think these are the crucial questions I need to ask myself and record my answers throughout the project if I want to maintain a sense of direction. To me, when I first came to Lapa two years ago, I sensed something utopic about the experience o the place. Like the arcades, it is a place of encounter, gatherings, and jouissance, but in a much different way (I think) than in Benjamin's Paris. The social gathering here is between extremes in the socioeconomic scale, and the jouissance is a cultural product: music, samba, a space of social interaction. Music and space have a long history in Brazil of being compared. In the famous Casas das Tias in Rio where samba was born, one would hear erudite music in the front, choro in the bedrooms, and samba in the back - the kitchen. This division, with many more styles, still occurs in Lapa in a different way - since samba has since been commodified and turned into a national music. Samba is perhaps, as a French friend suggested when we listened in Boteco do Rato, it is perhaps the center of gravity in Lapa. The greatest number of people come to hear
samba. It is the main attraction of Lapa. Secondly, people come to listen to other styles and that is when most of the separation happens. It might be true, but I think spatial and historical factors need to be taken into consideration.

But in the end, the question persists, why do this? Why not do something else? I don't want to do this just because I went through the motions of getting a grant…I guess what's really at the bottom of this is learning about a place that seems exceptional in the way it brings different people together. I want to study this without any illusions about the place, while it seems utopic for a second, reality sets in when one sees the underside, the different parts, the separation. But I think that's exactly what I want to think about. What is the use of pluralism, multiculturalism, the formation of a culture out of many sub-cultures?

7/10/11

At Fundição progresso I found an 'alternative' crowd dancing, but more like jumping, to ska, funk, and reggae beats played by various ensembles. The first one I saw came on around midnight. It was the Orquestra Brasileira de Musica Jamaicana. They were a solid band, playing standards in a dancy way that the crowd clearly enjoyed. I met Marisa Monte's ex-husband there, Pedro. A 27-year-old guy I couldn't believe had been married to one of Brazil’s brightest stars in music when he was only 20. Pedro said he didn't care much for this band, they just played standards, and it's true it got kind of boring after a while. I mean, seriously, how much can one listen to ‘Carinhoso’ or ‘Aguas de Março’ live anymore, even if it's in a funky beat that everyone can dance to? The next band was much better, with really skillful musicians and soloists playing afrobeat.. It was much more enjoyable to listen and dance to for me, but they started only at 2:30am.
7/11/11

The most common negative comment on Lapa is that it's too crowded: "é muita gente..."

7/14/11

On the way to Campo Grande to see Beiçola, I took a bus that went by the coastline, passing Ipanema, Leblon, Rocinha (the famous "favela", though its more like an independent city), and Barra. I was reading at this time a book by David Byrne called the "Bicycle Diaries", in which he recounts his thoughts on urban planning, politics, music, and philosophy while riding a fold-up bike around world capitals. It was interesting then to see the contrast between Rio's zone sul, Copacabana, Ipanema, and Leblon, with Barra da Tijuca. Barra is full of malls, closed condominiums, and large developments that make it look more like a Brazilian version of Miami than a part of Rio. It is difficult to get around without a car, and from conversations I've had with people here Barra's population has a reputation for being more superficial than those living in other parts of Rio. More striking was the ride inland from Barra, which was full of new developments, sterile buildings with blue-green glass windows that reminded me of Dubai's wasteland of empty construction in its periphery. Largely due to the upcoming World Cup and Olympic games, this construction boom is in full swing now, and the area just inland from Barra seems like a major spot for new housing developments. The architecture of the buildings was really ugly, a generic 'international style' that seemed to deny any local flavor, a bland mix of buildings that seemed to want to declare 'we are modern', cut off from previous generations, more advanced, more like the 'developed world'. David Byrne discusses this same exact thing in
Turkey, and I was reading that passage the day before I went on this bus ride. The connection came very naturally. It is fascinating to think about how these global processes of homogenization are all occurring more or less simultaneously in places as diverse as Brazil, Turkey, and Dubai. Interestingly enough, the most developed places, like Western Europe, are the very same places that preserve and value their architectural and cultural heritage to the point that it becomes a preservation fetish (think Paris construction codes). So while the periphery, or the up and coming countries are imitating what they believe is a modern way of developing, architecturally at least, the countries and cultures that are confident about their prestige as an 'advanced' nation are doing everything they can to keep an aesthetic of an older perhaps better time.

7/15/11

Today I saw 'Daquele Instante em Diante' - the Itamar Assumpção documentary - *again*. His music is great. One of my favorite parts is when he goes to Germany to play at a festival in Berlin. When he comes back, he feels so compelled to go back to Berlin and live there that he writes a song called 'Ir para Berlim'. Itamar was a musician that never gave in to mainstream markets and stuck to his avant-garde pop along with people like Arrigo Barnabé (though Itamar is much easier to digest and full of silence). After watching this we had a very long and broad discussing with Simone and Délia Fischer (a renowned jazz pianist here in Rio - I'm looking forward to my piano lesson with her next tuesday!) on the segmentation of the market. Délia, who just completed an album in honor of Egberto Gismonti, was frustrated with how conservative and unadventurous many musicians in Rio were. It doesn't help that the beach
culture here emphasizes body sculpting more than creative expression. São Paulo, she said, has a lot more to offer. This I’ve heard many times before, but for the first time I actually understand it, after having spent a few weeks here in Rio. There is a lot of music here - samba, forró, rock, electronic - but there is no way someone like Itamar Assumpção would ever come out of a city like this. My own interpretation is that artists here have less of an infrastructure - less places to play and make money than in São Paulo. This makes it heard to get out of the 'Brazilian music' box. Traditional, national, quality music sells. Therefore these quality musicians stick to playing chorinho, bossa nova, samba, and pagode. They are imitating what foreigners and Brazilians alike consider to be 'national' music, and therefore they are not reinventing it, nor will they do so in the foreseeable future.

Looking back these conversations I had with Délia, it is interesting to me that the most exciting music to her is along the lines of ‘The Bad Plus’, and she is a loyal fan of the Beatles. (You can tell by the Beatles wall posters on display at her home, the Beatles shirt she was wearing, and the fact that she often covers Beatles songs in her performances). So the issue here is that she also feels musically nostalgic - just like all these others musicians in Rio that she criticizes. From my point of view what’s interesting is that there is a general wave of nostalgia in music today that I believe was not present, say, 50 years ago. This phenomenon, professor Gumbrecht suggests, is one of many symptoms of the formation of socially constructed notion of time, or chronotope, that is beginning to replace the chronotope of modernity (although multiple chronotopes may coexist).

Earlier I had lunch with Victor, and he took me to his dad's office in the center of Rio. He works in heritage preservation and cultural programming, both independently and as a partner with companies like Light and government agencies. He was the first person to say something
explicit about Lapa that I had been reading in between the lines of many others I have interviewed: Lapa has a negative connotation. “é o lugar da zaração” (people looking for quick hook-ups), it's very crowded, and for a long time it has had the reputation of being unsafe. I've heard all of these things from various people, Pedro Bernardes, Simone Portellada, etc… But Victor's dad was straight forward about it, it has a negative connotation. This is interesting because despite this negative connotation, wealthy people still go there. Perhaps the revival has helped, it is closed to traffic on weekends and security was ramped up. But still, at least for wealthy people, going to Lapa is seen as kind of an adventure, a slight risk of encountering something unexpected, which may very well be something negative. Perhaps the messiness and dangers of Lapa make it something that people in Zona Sul only do once in a while. This certainly seems to be the case so far as I've seen with the family where I'm staying.

7/16/2011

Slavoj Zizek often jokes that he is a little bit totalitarian in the sense that he has love for humanity but is more much negative towards individuals. Today I find that I identify with this sentiment, though perhaps I feel more guilty about it. That's the truest thing I can conjure up to describe my unconscious feeling after today's (and last night's) adventure. I spent the night in São Gonçalo, a very poor neighborhood in the periphery of the periphery of Rio (technically, Niteroi). Bruno and Jane invited me to stay with them after we met in Lapa. Everyone I met has been extremely friendly and open. But I just can't relate to the people living there, although I can sympathize in a broad sense contemplating the universality of our basic needs, desires, the whole Maslow's pyramid scheme. What can I say, it's a place that's run down, forgotten by the moneyed interests, and in this narrow view superfluous, maybe unnecessary. On the other hand it might be
very necessary, it might be vital for the way we live today. In the way government works in partnership with influential actors like multinationals and other important players, some will always be left out the market, not necessarily out of malice or anything, but just a preference for certain things (that’s how the story goes).

Bruno and I discussed many different aspects of Lapa, the division of bourgeois and working class, which I am beginning to see as being demarcated by the ‘arcos’ themselves, interestingly enough.

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7/26/11

Yesterday I had a lesson with Délia Fischer which turned out to be a lesson for both me and Marc on how to arrange for piano and guitar together. One thing I realized is that my bossa and samba playing is actually pretty good - when I have both hands playing. She had me do various combinations, singing and doing minimal garnishing to complement the guitar, and vice versa, having the guitar complement me. But the hardest part was just playing the bass by itself on “Flor de Lis”. It takes real listening to the guitar, as if it was my right hand, in order to have the parts fit together, besides being just more rhythmically consistent. The part where I did better was playing and singing “Meu Bem, Meu Mal”. She emphasized that I don't need to play the bossa groove the whole time like a machine. It's something that needs to be implied throughout the song but does not need to be explicit all the time.
So far I have a pretty good idea of where different kinds of people go within Lapa. I know which streets play R$20 samba, which are farther away from the Santa Teresa hill. The street closest to Santa Teresa hill is the heart of the region where hip hop and funk are played. The question I still need to answer properly is how does different types of music segregate or congregate. Does the music style alone make a difference in the presence of certain kinds of people?

7/27/11

Lobão (Brazilian rockstar from the 80s) said in an article he didn't like "the dirty place called lapa". Caetano read this out loud in one of his concerts before playing a song praising Lobão and another one about Lapa. I think I should be careful when talking about the utopic nature of this space to remember how despite a unique level of diversity (both musical and demographic) offered by this place, there are many people who do not like it and certain styles of music are not equally represented, like rock for example, which may explain why Lobão doesn't care for the place. Rock bands play at circo voador frequently, and there is a bar on Mem de Sá that often features both national and international rock. But those places are scarce in comparison to places that play high quality samba, pagode, forró, and even hip hop.

At the jazz show in Lapa, I was once again amazed by the mass of people gathered to listened to jazz. Well, everyone was there to socialize, drink beer, and listen to jazz, in that order. The cariocas keep saying that the jazz that is played there is 'halucinante'. But the whole event is a performance, also a kind of fashion show, and a place where locals end up running into people in similar circles. Lots of artists, students, young people with an 'alternative' style. We were
listening to jazz and talking to some people from Goiânia when all of a sudden we heard a wave of loud cheers starting from the bar on the side of the stage and spreading throughout the square. Flamengo had just scored. The cheers and shouts completely drowned the sound of the music for a few seconds. And this happened several times. In the end, Flamengo beat Santos, 5-4. The people from Goiânia were here for a design conference, the girls studied fashion and the guy was in architecture. They were in Rio for the first time. They mentioned that in Goiânia there is a similar type of event but the music is chorinho but the crowd is smaller and less diverse. They even thought that the event copied the Lapa jazz because of the projections on the wall that were similar. I think their event is also organized by the government. But it's important to recognize that other similar gathering do occur in other places in Brazil. Music builds communities, it provides an excuse for people to meet, people with similar interests who share an understanding or curiosity for a certain style of music. Chorinho, Marc said, is for Brazilians what jazz is for Americans. It's a pretty sophisticated style of music, and people are familiar with it enough that a whole event can be organized around it. But the people we met last night preferred jazz for this type of gathering. It attracted a younger, hipper crowd, and they were clearly enjoying being in the middle of such a tumultuous event. I got the idea that in Goiânia, the Chorinho event attracts more families, and that the youth hang out in the back. Here in Lapa on a Wednesday night, the youth dominate.

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I am left at the end of the month spent here thinking of all the things I could have done that I didn't. I didn't get enough interviews, especially with people who have a totally different
profile than me. Most of the people I encountered and talked to were students, around my age, and from a similar social background. This is kind of understandable since it is difficult for me to approach random people and begin a conversation about Lapa. However, I did spend some time in São Gonçalo with Bruno and Jane, who live in a working class community in the periphery of Rio and who have a very different outlook on Lapa. This is already satisfactory for me, because I am not looking necessarily for a numerical balance in a sample. I do not have 'subjects' that I put in a controlled experiment. Part of this is living the experience and seeking out a variety of views on a place. It was a lot of fun, but it also took a lot of focus to keep asking questions wherever I would go, both to myself and to those around me.

Though this was the end of my time focusing on Lapa, I still spent almost two months traveling around Brazil, at first camping off the coast of Rio, going up to Salvador in the state of Bahia, and then spending about two weeks in Manaus, the capital of the Amazon. At each place I went I recorded music and interviewed people about musical and urban spaces. Nowhere could I find a place that rivaled Lapa in this type of conviviality, not even in Pelourinho, Bahia, where foreign tourists and locals contrasted too obviously to give the same kind of convivial experience. In São Paulo I found extremely diverse settings for music, though they were very spread out in the city and each had a very specific audience. In a small jazz club in Higienópolis where Northeastern pop star Lenine was rumoured to show up, I realized that over half the people in the audience were musicians or music students themselves. One of them was a pianist for the São Paulo Symphonic Orquestra and another was a backup singer for experimental legend Arrigo Barnabé.

The map of Lapa is intended to serve not only as an illustration of music and space but also as a mode of accessing other dimensions of Lapa that cannot be explained solely in text. My
hope is that it will help inspire interest in Lapa as a place that has symbolic value for Brazil, but like Brazil, it faces a struggle between changing and staying true to its roots, even if these roots may exist only in a collective imaginary.