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Groovy as resistance: countercultural festivals and Brazilian youth in the 1970s

Curtição e resistência: os festivais contraculturais e a juventude brasileira nos anos 1970

La onda y resistencia: los festivales contraculturales y la juventud brasileña en los años 70

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Abstract: The article analyzes sociability and audience experiences at 1970s Brazilian countercultural festivals. It investigates the audience profile, showing how interstate travel and unconventional aesthetics were tactics for questioning the order during the military dictatorship. It demonstrates these events' ambivalence: fueled by expanding consumption during the "economic miracle", they generated tensions due to the transgressive potential of behavioral liberalization.

Keywords: Counterculture. Youth. Military dictatorship.

Resumo: O artigo analisa a sociabilidade e as experiências do público nos festivais contraculturais brasileiros dos anos 1970. Investiga o perfil do público, evidenciando como viagens interestaduais e estéticas anticonvencionais constituíam táticas de questionamento à ordem durante a ditadura militar. Demonstra a ambivalência desses eventos, que, impulsionados pela expansão de consumo durante o "milagre econômico", geraram tensões devido ao potencial transgressor da liberalização de comportamentos.

Palavras-chave: Contracultura. Juventude. Ditadura militar.

Resumen: El artículo analiza la sociabilidad y las experiencias del público en los festivales contraculturales brasileños de los años 70. Investiga el perfil del público, mostrando cómo los viajes interestatales y las estéticas no convencionales eran tácticas para cuestionar el orden durante la dictadura militar. Demuestra la ambivalencia de estos eventos: impulsados por la expansión del consumo durante el "milagro económico", generaron tensiones por el potencial transgresor de la liberalización de conductas.

Palabras-clave: Contracultura. Juventud. Dictadura militar.

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Introduction

During the 1970s several countercultural festivals were held in Brazil, among those were the Summer Festival of Guarapari (1971 - Festival de Verão Guarapari, Espírito Santo), the Creation Day (1972 – Dia da Criação, Duque de Caxias/Rio de Janeiro), the Northeastern Experimental Fair (1972 - Feira Experimental do Nordeste, Madre do Brejo de Deus/Pernambuco), the Sound Free Fair 1st Concert (1972 – 1º Concerto da Feira Livre de Som ,Uberlândia/Minas Gerais), the Hollywood Rock (1975 – Rio de Janeiro), the Águas Claras (1975 – Festival de Águas Claras, Iacanga/São Paulo) and the Sound, Sun and Surf (1976 – Som, Sol e Surf, Saquarema/Rio de Janeiro). Those festivals put together a large variety of musicians without any recorded albums and rising bands such as Apocalypsis, Soma, Tamarineira Village (Ave Sangria), singers like Angela Rô Rô, Cátia de França and Lena Rios; and references of progressive rock including *Os Mutantes* and *O Terço*; alongside big-name record sellers such as Raul Seixas, Erasmo Carlos and Rita Lee. Furthermore, they favored the integration of audiences from distinct regions and profiles, who met at different places as follows: on lawns in front of stages, in bleachers, on roads, buses, inns, beaches, encampments, squares, and bars, contributing to the transformation of urban landscapes.

Their constant proximity during gigs, happenings, and informal talks fostered a dynamic of exchanges, triggering moments of festive creativity. Those occasions, were experienced by a large number of youngsters who were far from home, representing an “extraordinary” time of rupture with everyday life (Goetschel & Hidiroglou, 2013, p. 12) enabling creations, concessions, and aesthetics crossings in their use of free time – dedicated to fun, communion, interaction, and sociability. Such scenario was also a space of negotiations and conflicts. Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda (2004, p. 38) interpreted this notion of *festivity* not as escapism, but as a critical response to the rigid and solemn formality of traditional political discourse that shaped the cultural practices of previous generations.

From the theoretical-methodological standpoint, this article privileges the analysis of juvenile experiences and sociability as ways of contestation and negotiation in an authoritarian context. To understand the profile, motivations and practices of those festivals’ audiences, a diversified corpus of sources was surveyed. The research is mainly based on the

press of that time, whose coverage produced records of the events, revealed discourses, stigmas and the existing representations of counterculture.

In addition, the research includes testimonies collected directly by the author, using the oral history methodology and narratives found on *Facebook*. Considering that platform as a place of memory (Nora, 1993), those digital narratives, due to their constant re-elaboration, express affections, meanings and belonging alongside the construction of collective identities around those events. The critical juxtaposition between journalistic coverage and retrospective memories allows us to understand the tensions between lived experiences and media representations of festivals

In the early 1970s, the Brazilian cultural market structure went through a reconfiguration driven by the confluence between the modernizing-authoritarian project of the military dictatorship and the social transformations catalyzed by the "economic miracle." A new consumer middle class was expanding. Such group of individuals were predominantly white, educated, urbanized, and beneficiaries of the material expansion of the period and they were open to cultural products linked to resistance culture. The capitalist modernization and urbanization implemented by the military regime enabled a scenario that, although conceived under an authoritarian regime, fostered the formation of a cultural market that influenced the liberalization of customs (Napolitano, 2017, p. 214). That audience, formed mostly by metropolitan youngsters, was influenced by the national-popular (*nacional-popular)*[2] of the second half of the 1960s and the Tropicalia (*Tropicalismo)* Movements.[3] While it inherited political engagement from the national-popular movement, it also assimilated irony, the ability to create collages of different cultural traditions, cosmopolitanism, and a rejection of the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture from Tropicalism. In this context, it is also crucial to consider the emergence of opposition movements to the dictatorship anchored in other identities and cultural expressions, such as Black Rio, a Black movement that reached its peak in the second half of the 1970s.

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[2] Artistic view whose elements were the creation of critical cultural works representing popular classes, seeking to reflect upon national identity, promoting political awareness and becoming an instrument of social transformation and cultural resistance in Brazil.
[3] The initial marks of *Tropicalismo* are records by musicians such as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil in 1967. In 1968, the manifesto album Tropicália ou Panis et Circencis was released, a work that presented the main characteristics of the collective in the musical field. The following year, Caetano and Gil were exiled; this is considered one of the reasons for the dilution of *Tropicalismo.*

Artists influenced by counterculture, in general, did not aim at sensitizing the audience by means of explicit an explicit denunciation of misery and authoritarianism. The musical production disseminated at the festivals also did not aim for didactic political awareness or as an end in itself, a fact that, combined with transgressive aesthetics, earned counterculture adherents the label of "outsiders."

The festivals analyzed appear as collective expressions of part of the youth during the military dictatorship, expressing experiences of resistance, inquiry and rupture with the current behavioral expectations. At the same time, they were stigmatized by part of the regime agents, who characterized them as events attended by dangerous *hippies* who were drug users.

It seems relevant to explain the notion of *youth* adopted in this study, which considers it a sociocultural construct, thus going beyond a strict biological perspective. In this article, youth is understood from a sociological and historical perspective, formed by a group that shares common values and experiences within a specific sociopolitical context. In the light of this issue, in 1964, Talcott Parsons (1964, p. 36) identified that: "[...] Historical trends such as modernization, industrialization, urbanization, the rise of the middle class, and the expansion of public education fostered age-based segregation and the stratification of youth, which in turn promoted the development of youth culture". Reguillo Cruz (2000, p. 25-26.) exposed the processes that evidence *youth* as category: "[...] the economic organization through accelerated industrial, scientific, and technological advancement, which implied adjustments in the productive organization of society; cultural supply and consumption; and lastly, legal discourse." For that author, age "[...] takes on different validity not only in different societies, but also within the same society, establishing differences mainly based on the social positions that young people occupy" (Reguillo Cruz, 2000, p 26).

The effervescence of behaviors observed at festivals coexisted with mechanisms of commodification during the height of the modernizing-authoritarian project (1968-1973), inserting in the market a reconfigured demographic group, evidencing the rise of a consumer profile linked to the metropolitan youth (Barcinski, 2015, p. 39).

Sales of products from the recording industry, such as LPs and singles, jumped from 14,818 units in 1968 to 25,591 in 1972 (Dias, 2000, p. 55). In such context, the expansion of consumption of cultural products such as records, sound equipment and tickets, created

cracks in the conservative social tissue. The apparent contradiction between commercial logic, which made those events possible, and their transgressive potential reflects the ambivalent nature of modernization: while the dictatorship promoted global capitalist integration, it also expanded material conditions such as urbanization and the growth of the recording industry, allowing for the emergence of spaces for behavioral experimentation and, by extension, the subversion of the regime's own moral foundations. Enjoying those products also became a political act, challenging the regime's attempt to control the meanings of culture. Thus, counterculture also manifested itself through market legitimacy and the circulation of ideas enabled by, and in the interest of, large national and multinational companies such as Continental, Philips, Polydor, RCA, EMI, Odeon, and Som Livre.

Taking that into account, agents of countercultural behavior went through a process of negotiation with the cultural industry. This revealed emerging relationships as characterized by Raymond Williams (1979, p. 126-127), resulting from the creation of new meanings and practices expressed in renewed works, feelings and values. However, the negotiation occurred through a dominant perspective, aligned to the models previously established and consolidated practices as cultural references. Such dynamics generated tensions since leaders of commercial activities avoided risking the launch of products with clearly emerging features without previously negotiating ways of minimizing the dimensions proposed by cultural agents, also aiming at minimizing losses resulting from censorship. Moreover, the market in general prioritized launches based on well-succeeded previous experiences, that is, on features that were already dominant or residual traits that reacted to changes in a controlled manner.

The middle class, which experienced significant economic growth at the time, was one of the pillars of the military regime due to their consent to authoritarian values and their adhesion to modernization and repression policies. However, the same group, throughout the 1970s, started to experience a disconnect between the material benefits they received and the growing dissatisfaction with the political and social restrictions imposed by the dictatorship. While benefiting from the regime's economic policies, part of the middle class, especially the youth, became more critical and open to cultural manifestations that questioned traditional values, gender roles, and sexual norms. The main social base of the resistance culture, therefore, was embedded in this ambiguous space. The children of a middle class that, to a

large extent, supported the military regime, began to nurture cultural and artistic manifestations, challenging traditional patterns. This youth found in festivals an opportunity to explore identity and behavioral issues in environments that carried challenging dimensions. The cultural and artistic practices present in those events revealed an ambivalent character: they were simultaneously an expression of the middle class and instruments for questioning the very structures that sustained it.

Global resonances: *Woodstock* and counterculture dissemination

In the international scenario, festivals such as *Monterey Pop* (1967), *Isle of Wight* (1968) and *Woodstock & Art Fair* (1969) had a decisive impact on the dissemination and consolidation of countercultural manifestations and psychedelic music, attracting huge crowds. Woodstock, for example, gathered around 400,000 people, a record surpassed by the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, which attracted an audience of approximately 600,000 spectators.

At those festivals, the songs presented sonic and poetic nuances, as well as distortions performed in rebellious performances, contributing to an environment populated by experimentation, in which some of the audience used psychoactive substances. Those events united genres such as rock, soul, folk, and country, bringing worldwide notoriety to musicians like Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, who also became icons of the counterculture in Brazil. According to Anaïs Fléchet (2011, p. 262), the media enabled those festivals to acquired characteristics as "worlds-events" (Sirinelli, 2002), functioning as vehicles of collective emotions experienced simultaneously at a global scale, thus influencing perceptions and actions in different parts of the world. Just like *places of memory* (Nora, 1993), structuring, preserving, and formalizing collective memories with their heroes, symbols, and songs in a transnational way. Exposing influences marked by films, documentaries, books, records, instruments, photographs, and clothing.

The documentary *Woodstock*, launched in Brazilian cinemas in October 1970, was one of the great influences of festivals in the country, being constantly referred to by organizers, musicians, and audience as a model of aesthetic and behavioral expression. Maribel Portinari wrote in her review for *Globo* in the opening week: "[...] [the film shows] all colors and sounds, with such power of fascination that the viewer hardly realizes that three hours of projection can be long." And she concluded: "No one can resist the demystifying frankness

with which all the controversies of a generation in search of identification and affirmation are addressed” (*Globo*, Oct 28, 1970, p. 13).

From the second half of the 1960s onwards, a multiplication of information channels occurred, including radio, television, cinema and magazines, disseminating young ideas. The television festivals gave prominence to artistic production opposing the military dictatorship. However, for part of the youth, they were out of step with the latest trends: the experimentation of artists like the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, The Who, and Pink Floyd; the semiotics present in films like Yellow Submarine (1968), Easy Rider (1969), and documentaries like Monterey Pop (1968) and Woodstock (1970). Those festivals brought a freshness in imagery, sound, and behavior, introducing provocative and demystifying attitudes to the stage, as well as a sense of unpredictability.

Festivals influenced by Woodstock functioned as spaces that fostered community experience. This dynamic was enhanced by the strategic choice of locations far from urban centers, where less institutional surveillance could allow for greater freedom. This led to the emergence of collective practices such as food sharing and the organization of support networks, exemplified by the actions of the Hog Farm hippie community at Woodstock. Such experiences, although transient, symbolized a rejection of hierarchical structures, proposing alternative models of sociability.

The inherent tendency towards dramatization and narrative condensation gives audiovisual language a powerful potential for sensory and emotional engagement (Rosenstone, 1988). Thus, cinema constructed imaginaries around Woodstock through resources such as editing, framing, and soundtrack. In this way, the cinematic experience became central to the festival’s influence, since the images and sounds recorded at Woodstock shaped youth aspirations, including in Brazil, consolidating its image as a landmark of counterculture.

Clothing, music, and the use of psychoactive substances, for example, reinforced group identities through shared transgression, consolidating bonds among young people. The countercultural community project integrated artistic, economic, and affective dimensions, configuring itself as a critique of Western individualism.

he impact of works like that documentary was formative in shaping the expectations, practices, and identities of a segment of Brazilian youth. By translating the American festival

into a sensory experience with its aesthetics that reverberated communion, freedom, and transgression, the film, in a way, crystallized a collective imaginary that transcended geographical boundaries. In the repressive context of the Brazilian military dictatorship, those media representations highlighted a model of alternative sociability and a repertoire of possibilities: the idea of open-air festivals as spaces for community experimentation and horizontality, the valorization of music as a political act, as well as different aesthetics and gestures as a language of resistance.

Music, especially rock, played a structuring role in this process of critique to power mechanisms. The sonic experience, characterized by high volume and intense sensory stimulation, contributed to the idea of dissolving individual boundaries, favoring the perception of collective unity. These ideas were sung by bands like *O Terço* in *Hey amigo*: *Cante a canção comigo!/ Metade É parte de um todo!/ Nesse rock Estamos todos juntos* (“Hey amigo”: Sing the song with me!/ Half is part of a whole!/ In this rock, we are all together!) (Terço, 1975); and *Os Mutantes* in *Uma pessoa só*: *Você também está tocando/ Você também está cantando/ Estamos numa boa, pescando pessoas no mar/ Aqui Numa pessoa só* (Just one person: You’re playing too/ You’re singing too/ We’re having a good time, fishing for people in the sea/ Here Just one person) (Mutantes, 1992). Speeches amplified by the pulsating reverberation of rock. The first, a straightforward rock song evoking the strength of youth, and the second, with elements of progressive rock, begins contemplatively before culminating in a more energetic moment, mirroring in its sonic dynamics the idea of the fusion of the individual with the collective.

In a context of growing countercultural influx and the influence of intellectuals such as Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus, an emerging alternative public formed, including high school students, university students, counterculture enthusiasts, and hippies. The age range concentrated between 16 and 29 years old (according to the analysis of Brazilian press articles used in this research) reflects the moment of identity formation and the search for autonomy. The relative financial security of the middle class, along with a habitus (Bourdieu, 1983) that enabled and shaped expressions of nonconformity and audacity in seeking dissident ways of life brought together the apparent opposition between the external social context and the subjective experiences of these young people. This combination provided dispositions and preferences within the context of social

influences, triggering, in turn, reactions and adaptive processes (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 106). What united them, beyond age or social class, was an interest in a “marginal life,” a deliberate rejection of dominant values expressed in questioning morality, behavioral experimentation, and an aspiration for alternative models to consumerism and authoritarianism.

Hippies often arrived in cities and camped on squares, fields and beaches, sometimes in a continuous trend, not limited to a specific period. However, their flow intensified during vacations, weekends, and holidays since many counterculture adherents held formal jobs or were unable to break with urban life – which labelled them as “summer hippies” or “weekend hippies.” Their journeys were made on foot or by hitchhiking, almost always with limited financial resources. Their goal was to break with authoritarian and traditional power relations, seeking novelty in the aesthetic and social fields.

Non-conformity fueled the creation of forms of bodily expression and the search for new forms of sensory perception related to drug use (Marques, 2005, p. 212), which acted as liberators of behaviors repressed by the moralism of society. Against these values, communities formed that, in some cases, developed subsistence economies (Dunn, 2016, p. 26). According to Marcelo Ridenti (2016, p. 26), such characteristics constitute a “[...] revolutionary romanticism on an international scale in the 1960s,” marked by the desire to live intensely in the present, by the appreciation of a bohemian lifestyle, by the primacy of practice over theory, and by a modest economic condition.

In such scenery, national expressions of a global phenomenon were also manifested, driven by resistance to the dictatorship. Those expressions were linked to conditions shared by various societies: growth of the middle classes, expansion of higher education, youth protagonism, urbanization, rejection of colonial wars, inability of established powers to keep up with social changes, and the popularization of television.

Those young individuals influenced by counterculture were far from being a homogeneous group since they had particular trajectories, traveled to several different places within the Brazilian territory and presented distinct motivations. In fact, their adhesion to counterculture could represent multiple forms of protest. Marcos Napolitano (2014, p. 210) analyzed alternative culture ambiguities, highlighting the coexistence of rejection and acceptance of the cultural industry products and languages. Political attitudes related to

counterculture ranged between active engagement and disengagement focused on individual freedom. A weakening of collective revolutionary ideals can also be observed, which were, in many cases, replaced by the pursuit of personal freedoms. This transformation sometimes manifested itself through vague self-awareness or mysticism.

Sociability practices in countercultural festivals

A group from Niterói formed by four hippies, aged 18 to 23, going to the Guarapari Festival (Festival de Guarapari, Espírito Santo), appeared in an article of *Jornal do Brasil* (Feb 13, 1971, p. 8):

> They set up shop two days ago under the shade of an almond tree on Icaraí beach to sell their handicrafts in order to raise funds to participate in the Festival [...] they were not bothered by the Vice Squad. Some police officers were there and verified that they are harmless. Based on the volume of sales of their work, they expect to travel to Guarapari later today.

One of the hippies, the law student Luís Antônio, 23 years old, informed being a composer who intended to present some of his songs at the festival, revealing the collaborative ideals disseminated at the time. He also explained his thoughts: "freedom without many restrictions, seeking truth, through research, observation, and communication with the world so that we are not isolated from it and can understand it" (*Jornal do Brasil,* 13 de fev., 1971, p. 8).

In the same issue, the captain of the military police, Luís Carlos, gave details about the policing in Guarapari: "Before the festival, a cleanup was carried out to get rid of the hippies who had invaded the city, to eliminate those who weren't authentic. We understand that a hippie is someone who makes love and not war" (*Jornal do Brasil,* Feb 13, 1971, p. 8). The "authentic hippie" according to the police officer "[...] doesn't steal, doesn't disturb, and lives peacefully like any other Brazilian citizen" (*Jornal do Brasil,* Feb 13, 1971, p. 8). "cleanup operations" were usual in that exception period. In the following year, in Arembepe (Bahia), an important hippie destination, the "cleanup operation", destined to "regulate" coastline and arrest "potheads" and "drug dealers" resulted in dozens of arrests. A *Tribuna da Bahia* (Feb 10, 1972,) published: "30 hippies arrested, two with marijuana and one with paregoric elixir". The number of arrests increased to over 100 in March and continued growing up to the end of that year. In August, *Jornal da Bahia* (Aug 13, 1972) reported:

"Police in Action: Farewell to the easy life in Arembepe". The article "Hippies without peace" describes the siege carried out around the hippies:

> The Federal Police ordered all states to launch a rigorous campaign against young people wearing necklaces and with long hair. Last week, nearly 200 of them were arrested at the Ipanema Art Fair in Rio, and 12 were expelled from their mini-fair in Praça da Alfândega, Porto Alegre, where they were selling paintings. One hundred and twenty are imprisoned in Salvador and several more were sent to jail in Recife (*Veja*, Mar 4, 1970, p. 70).

This type of arrest, generally classified as "vagrancy," was an arbitrary and preventative practice, being one of the main strategies used to repress followers of the counterculture. The arrests were permeated by violence and carried a strong symbolic value, as in the case of forced haircuts on hippies. In this repressive context, a few months after the Guarapari Festival, the military police raided bars and expelled tourists attending the Ouro Preto Winter Festival, using tear gas (*Jornal do Brasil*, July 27, 1971, p. 12).

During the event, the police made several raids on the encampments, arresting young people on charges of "marijuana possession." Simultaneously, a large number of hippies camped there were evicted. According to the security agent interviewed by *Jornal do Brasil*, those "banished" had two destinations (Feb 16, 1971, p. 33): "Those proven dangerous will go to prison; the others, less offensive, we'll release them far away, on the way to the State of Rio." *Correio da Manhã* (February 13, 1971) interviewed a group of 50 hippies expelled from Guarapari, aged between 18 and 24, from Brasília and states like Alagoas and Bahia, who shouted slogans such as "long live the police chief," "hallelujah," "they'll demand suits and ties," and "we're the ones who don't bathe, but you're the dirty ones." Moises, one of the young men, ironically commented on the situation: "I'm taking the group to the land promised by the police chief." Meanwhile, Beto Sem Destino, identified as the oldest of the group, reported: "I've never had such a good welcome as here. The people really liked us. It's a shame they expelled us, but it doesn't matter. We're going to Bahia; the tide is better there. I'll spend Carnival in my homeland."

The article *Os mil sons de Guarapari* (A thousand sounds of Guarapari) (*Jornal do Brasil*, Feb 11, 1971, p. 12) Illustrated by Ari Gomes's photos, portrayed the repressive environment against the hippies. One image, showing a young man hanging up his pants at a encampment, bears the ironic caption: "It's possible they'll crease the pants to disguise themselves at the festival." Another announced: "The hippies arrived peacefully in Guarapari,

but they've already been warned that jail is a big problem." The remaining photographs documented the police approach to the young people, their removal from Guarapari in police vehicles, and their group movement after the expulsion.

Other youngsters were arrested, such as Jefferson Nicola Chacaxiro Tommasi, "caught in the act of trafficking narcotics and drugs," according to a report from the Army Intelligence Center (CIE, Mar 20, 1973).

While moral repression was taking place, young people navigated these conflicts in a creative and relaxed way, emphasizing social activities parallel to the festival. Sergio Garschagen, then 22 years old, recalls: "I went to Guaraparistock with a group of friends. We camped at Três Praias and it was day and night, night and day of partying. Especially after the crowd left. That's when another festival really began, of free love, marijuana, and swimming in the sea naked. Everyone naked" (Garschagen, 2020).[4]

Sleeping in public places such as beaches and squares was common practice among youngsters attending festivals. This occurred due to the creation of sociability environments, lack of financial resources or paid accommodation in the regions where the events took place. In the encampments, hippies' fairs and other sociability events (such as traveling and meals), those young individuals talked to each other and disseminated cultural information made available by magazines, records, radios and cinema. Such cosmopolitan pieces of news were part of the attraction for that audience. Therefore, festivals also worked as spaces of cultural mediation, where the audience became active agents in the reception process (Martín-Barbero, 2006, p. 169). In such dynamics, spectators and artists from different regions of the country met, exchanged knowledge and enjoyed greater behavioral and aesthetic freedom, favored by their distancing from family structures and everyday routines, which were marked by traditional values. The hippie Celsão "de La Mancha", who was in Águas Claras (1975) reported:

> There were people from all places, from everywhere. Then, it was inevitable that you exchanged information of your place of origin, your community and state, you know? We also shared personal information and musical tastes. We learned about the launch of a new album by this or that musician, this or that band (Mancha, 2025).

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[4] The research for this article included the collection of unpublished testimonies, given to the author, as well as the analysis of publicly available reports on webpages and social networks. All sources are listed in the references.

Celsão used to live in Bauru (São Paulo) and he remembers his going to the festival: “I took a direct bus. I sat on the bus engine, at the very back, because there were no seats available. The bus was crowded, there was no space for anybody else, or their thoughts inside that bus”.

When covering the Guarapari festival, the *Cruzeiro* magazine (Mar 3, 1971, p. 72) published: “In their camps and tents, the dudes created their own musical enjoyment under the moonlight and stars, showing that they were in their own world. Tumbadoras, agogôs, and melodicas filled the nights with a unique and special rhythm”.

According to John Blacking (1995, p. 208), The experience of listening to music constitutes a form of performance, as listeners recreate and produce meaning from the sounds they hear. Beyond this performance during concerts, the audience constructed musical polyphonies in the mornings, afternoons, and early hours of the festivals through improvisation and collective appreciation, the “groovy.” Playing an active role in intensifying the use of sound, through these practices young people developed intensified forms of convergence and social interaction through communitarianism. The audience stayed together longer than at typical urban events, playing, dancing, establishing physical contact, sharing food and instruments, thus assuming the role of singer, entertainer, debater, and collective practitioner of music. After all, as defended by Tia Denora (2013, p. 139-141), music is always collective, it is a way of sharing time and space. The collective experiences in encampments, hitchhiking and festivals provided those youngsters with a feeling of belonging and camaraderie related to shared moments, which solidified their conviction to engage in activities with a subversive theme.

Historically, the act of camping has been associated with youth, symbolizing both revolt Against boredom and conventional structures and a way of promoting some rupture with the domestic and familiar environment. In the ephemeral camps set up inside the festivals and in adjacent areas, couples, musical groups, and groups of hitchhikers formed, heading back home or to new destinations. Celsão recalled:

> There were groups of tents. Those little groups, people playing guitar, singing, playing flute, playing tambourine, playing percussion. All sorts of instruments, there were people who did what Hermeto Pascoal does, grabbing a helmet, a kettle, anything was an excuse to make music. So, people made music out of everything. And the singing. Singing a lot of protest songs, a lot of rock’n’roll [...] Gil, Caetano, Chico, Vandré, and many others were very popular. Raul... Raul’s songs. People playing and singing there and putting on their own show (Mancha, 2025).

Linked to entertainment, these social and musical practices functioned as resistance to "morality and good customs," enhancing the creation of bonds and awareness. In this sense, music functioned as an instrument of political agency, as it was a central element in creating social cohesion and increased the capacity of marginalized people and groups to forge collective identities and, from there, choose and determine their own destiny (Mattern, 1998, p. 6). Thus, although lots of these sociability actions were linked to the space and time of commercial events, the audiences appropriated from such occasions by "fabricating" practices (Certeau, 1998, p. 39) and meanings that had not been previously set.

While romanticizing counterculture practices hampers their historical analysis, reducing them to mere alienated catharsis of impotent young individuals is also a reductionist view. When analyzing music as social announcer, Jacques Attali (2009, p. 6) explains: "Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix say more about the liberatory dream of the 1960s than any theory of crisis." Not by chance, the encampments were seen by agents of the dictatorship as centers of "psychological warfare" and civil opposition, becoming frequent targets of state coercion. The pamphlet "*How They Act*," reproduced in the *Estado de São Paulo* newspaper (Jan 31, 1974, p. 7) highlighted the pretentious role of music in the dissemination of socialism and the accomplishment of subversive activities:

> [...] the international conspiration to implement the so-called 'socialism' has used songs as their main tool, giving them characteristics of violence and reaching the youth magnificent reserves of creativity, leading them inadvertently to the protest songs.

Published in 1974, at the end of the Médici's government, the leaflet synthetizes the state fear from juvenile organizations. It was not an isolated document, but rather a continuous strategy of surveillance, which after the AI-5, became more explicit. The repression prevented the organization of some events such as the 1969 Spring Festival in São Paulo, combining blatant police violence with surveillance aimed at stigmatizing and intimidating, as occurred in Guarapari. During president Geisel's government, repression was more selective, but without ceasing to exert control. Festivals such as Hollywood Rock and Águas Claras (both in 1975) remained under the monitoring of infiltrated agents and prior censorship, demonstrating that, even with the decrease in explicit physical violence, the State persisted in its objective of monitoring, cataloging, and co-opting potential spaces for questioning the social order.

The *Cruzeiro* magazine (Mar 3, 1971. p. 72) described the outlook of female hippies in Guarapari as follows: “[...] [wear] a t-shirt, worn-out Lee jeans, some necklaces and a ribbon around the head. Nothing else”. It also informed that most of the youngsters were university students from southeast. *O Globo* (Feb 13, 1971, p. 70) reported that the encampment next to the festival sheltered around 300 tents and classified it as the great highlight of the festival “where there is a lot of singing and the young individuals are really excited”. In addition, it questioned the hippies’ “authenticity” since some had cars parked on the venue. Such questioning reveals asceticism as a requirement for validation, emptying countercultural ideals by transforming them into mere fallacies and inconsistencies. Both the agents of the dictatorship and the hegemonic media exoticized the hippies, delegitimizing them under permanent suspicion.

The yearning for cultural and social experiences drove many young people to seek alternatives to daily life and conventional obligations – as well as formal employment – inspired by transnational phenomena such as dropout, the break with organized capitalist society, aiming to build alternative models to established institutions.

As pointed out by Maria Paula de Araújo (2000, p. 97), the alternative leftist movements were a direct result of the ideas and attitudes emerged from the 1968 events.

These global revolts challenged the traditional view of politics, giving greater importance to emotions and subjectivity, understood as individual experience, and valuing otherness. Furthermore, they emphasized personal and affective relationships among participants, rejecting traditional forms of participation, political representation, and hierarchies, as well as institutionalized conventions and patterns of living. It was in this environment, shaped by the experiences of the late 1960s, that movements linked to political minorities and differences, such as the Black, gay, and feminist movements, were born and developed (Araújo, 2000, p. 72).

Countercultural influences were assimilated in the country by means of the circulation of information and were integrated into local contexts. Young hippies were some of the actors that played such role. They traveled in a cheap and light way from place to place, spending the least possible to broaden cultural horizons and seek counterpoints to the regimented and bureaucratic life. In this way, they demonstrated a cosmopolitan attitude and a need to

discover what was going on "in the world." Such travels, therefore, functioned as formative experiences (Napolitano, 2023, p. 65-66).

The stigmatized treatment reserved for the hippie figure was made explicit in an edition of the *A Plateia* newspaper (Jun 25, 1968):

> As we widely reported in our last Sunday edition, four 'hippies' have been completely polarizing the attention of the population of Santana since last Thursday, when they arrived in our city. Showing off their multicolored and exotic clothes, and enormous hair and beards, the four young men have attracted the admiration of everyone, especially the students who have begun to constantly surround them, asking them all sorts of questions. The police chief, Paulo Silveira Gadret, dissatisfied with the crowds they cause wherever they go, gave them 24 hours to leave the city [...].

Constantly subjected to denigration, hippies were reduced to stereotypes. Another example can be found in the categorization made by lawyer Mozart Monteiro in the *Globo* newspaper (Nov 6, 1970, p. 16): "Hairy, bearded, lazy, and poorly dressed [...] increasingly numerous, they swarm and vegetate throughout the world." In this sense, right after the Águas Claras festival, *Veja* magazine (Jan 29, 1975, p. 93) published a long article about the event and started describing its audience:

> They call themselves hippies, freaks, lunatics, nutcases, or none of the above. A harmless and anarchic brotherhood that no longer boasts of its only dogma—peace and love. The world, unfortunately, does not pray that way. Nor does it seem willing to change. Better, therefore, to give up on catechism and communicate what one feels and thinks only, and at most, to those close to them. From their disillusioned seclusion, these people only escape during their scarce days of celebration. Like the Águas Claras Festival—which aimed to be the embryo of a future Brazilian Woodstock. Some arrived by car, others, by bus or motorcycle. Most, hitchhiked. Already on the way, therefore, the verb "to share" was practiced. Everything belongs to everyone—the car seat, the water bottle, the sandwich and the cigarette, the corner in the tent and, if you know how to ask, the shoulder to nap on and the waist to wrap your arms around. While constantly willing to share, the participants show no particular interest in verbal communication. Perhaps saturated with daily discussions, they listen little and speak almost nothing. This generation, briskly influenced by rock music, seems quite different from previous ones, in whose gatherings the music, in essence, never drowned out the words of the conversation.

The article highlights the bewilderment towards the counterculture, treated as alienated, harmless, and weak in the face of the world. Emphasizing the generational contrast and the difficulty of communication, it suggests a gap in understanding, in which the clash between generations manifests itself in ideals, language, and forms of sociability.

The following week, the *Manchete* magazine also addressed the Águas Claras audience in a text signed by Wilson Cunha, as follows:

> In a country still forming, talking about counterculture is ridiculous. That's why, after some fruitless attempts to present our rock as such, we wholeheartedly embraced the mystique of sound. Replace the altar with the stage, the word with sound. The contrition—whether on the Botafogo field (Rio) or in Águas Claras, in the interior of São Paulo (as seen in the photos)—is the same as in a temple. Because, in truth, it's always like that. Those who cannot act on Earth appeal to the heavens [...] For them, sex is not taboo and nudity will hardly be punished. Freed from any guilt complex, feeling responsible for nothing, they are close to Nirvana (*Manchete*, Feb 8,1975, p. 60).

The journalist presents a doubly reductionist diagnosis of countercultural manifestations: first, by declaring the unviability of counterculture in Brazil, labeled as a "country still forming"; second, by reducing its expression to a mystical-religious dimension. Delegitimizing the challenging and transformative potential of young people, Cunha frames them within escapist expressions, whose rupture with taboos is linked to apathetic individualism.

Several Brazilian cities witnessed the emergence of spaces of countercultural influence since the late 1960s, when the hippies' fairs and "meeting points" appeared in Visconde de Mauá (Rio de Janeiro), Arembepe (Bahia), São Tomé das Letras (Minas Gerais), and Crato (Ceará), among other destinations which up to that point were not included in the conventional tourist attractions.

Leon Kaminski (2018, p. 20) pointed out the ambiguous character of traveling in that context: "If those trips had their liberating character highlighted by the authoritarianism of the regime, they also benefited from the context of prosperity of the 'economic miracle'. The roads were, at the same time, spaces of freedom and symbols of the dictatorial regime. Thus, the road was configured as a symbolic territory of freedom for young people who sought, even if temporarily, the suspension of dictatorial repression. They acted as mediating agents, conveying information related to cultural transformations and customs. That flow fostered the emergence of countercultural scenes in urban centers of the interior (Kaminski, 2018, p. 14-16). Such dynamics appear when we observe the countercultural festivals in small and medium-sized cities in the interior of the country, thus showing the perception of those municipalities' mobilizing potential.

Those trips requited cunning (Certeau, 1998): one had to be attentive to take advantage of opportunities and loopholes, guaranteeing their journey as cheap as possible. Such way of traveling revealed, therefore, the expression of a unique aesthetic and the exaltation of marginal behaviors. Rosa Cheixas, known as "Seventh Moon," recalls her

journey to Águas Claras: "I ended up doing it in almost a week. I had time, I stopped in some cities along the way: Limeira, Piracicaba, Americana. I sold handcrafts and made friends. Some stretches I hitchhiked, the most varied rides" (Cheixas, 2025).

The experience of traveling and cultural discoveries were fundamental components of the journeys to festivals. Toca Seabra, reinformed the heterogeneity of the audience in the Sound, sun and surf festival: “It was not a group from Rio de Janeiro. There were people from Rio de Janeiro, but also from Vale do Paraíba, Minas. It was quite heterogeneous, there were people from many states” (Pitanga, 2018). The *Manchete* magazine described the encampment formed on the beach by enthusiasts of rock and surf:

> Above the tents, smoke with a strange smell permeated all of Itaúna: finding a simpleton there was practically impossible. Clothes hanging on makeshift clotheslines, or even on top of the awnings, betrayed the previous day’s rain. The sound was of guitars and flutes, and there was constant movement between the tents. There were people from Rio, Santa Catarina, Argentina, and even those who did not know where they came from: ‘We are from the world.’ (*Manchete*, 19 jun. 1976. p. 115).

Angelo José Dias (2025) recalled the adventure of the journey: “[...] [It was] unforgettable. We were five in an *opala* (Chevrolet model), three slept inside the car, one in the trunk, and the fifth had to sleep on the sand outside”. David Santos (2025) described a similar experience: “Saquarema 1976, Itaúna beach, I was there!!! I slept on the sand on the first night, in a sleeping bag! It was worth it!”. Rosimeri Menezes (2025) told us how he managed to attend the festival: “I went there, escaping from my parents”. Antonio Borges Conceição (2025) reported that: “In Niterói, in the bus station, there were 2 or 3 buses leaving at midnight to the Saquarema festival. It was great, everyone with their backpack, camping tent, a bottle of wine... When we arrived in Saquarema, it was only fun; we went straight to the beach to put the tent up, there were a lot of tents” (Conceição, 2025).

The accounts constructed from memory emphasize adventure, daring, and the feeling of freedom. The journeys, with their improvisations, discomforts, and solidarity, are narrated not as deprivations, but as rites of passage. Hiding from parents, traveling cramped in a car, or sleeping on the sand become elements evoked by that youth in search of autonomy and pleasure in the face of the restrictions of an authoritarian period. However, the road, a symbolic space of this freedom, was also a territory of vulnerability and risk. For example, the *Cidade de Santos* newspaper (Jan 19, 1975, p. 6) recorded the tragic death of the young individual called Carlos Roberto on the way to the Águas Claras Festival: After disembarking

from the train in Bauru (SP) and walking to Iacanga, he was run over and killed by a Ford Corcel while resting on the shoulder of the road.

The journey to the festivals, loaded with meanings and risks, remains in the memory of those who experienced them or only heard of the events. Otto Flávio (2025), who was a child at the time, recalled: “I was too young at the time (around 11 years old), and everything I heard about was rather ‘vague,’ remaining largely in my imagination.” Antonio Ribeiro (2025) attributes a turning point in his life to the festival: “I was there, it was crazy. And it was during the military regime. I loved it so much that I came to live here in Saquarema.” Surfer Rogerio Lacerda (2025) recalled: “And there I was with my Gledson [surfboard]...”. This last statement summarizes how individual memory is constructed from material and affective landmarks, which find their basis in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects (Nora, 1993, p. 9). It is worth noting that counterculture enthusiasts and surfers shared common values such as an alternative way of life and cosmopolitanism.

The Guarapari Festival remains in the memory of those who lived it and those who only heard about the others’ experiences. In the Facebook group called *Guarapastock*[5], accounts perpetuate stories about the festival, establishing connections, personal and collective narratives, as in the case of José Machado (2020): “I was in Guarapari, seeing the activity for the festival and eager to go. I wasn’t allowed, under the pretext that I was too young. But I have friends who went there, and, in this way, I participated through the stories they told me,” thus incorporating experiences transmitted by others (Jelin, 2002, p. 13). In this sense, another record is found in the photo album of Byra Dorneles’s diary, who was in Águas Claras in 1975. Assembled by a group of friends, the album brings together images and handwritten messages. One of the entries is from Tao, who, despite not attending, wrote a poem under a photograph of tents: “I don’t know about the clear waters/ Nor about mountains/ Nor about valleys/ I know about you” (Tao, 1975).

Journalist Beatriz Coelho Silva (2020), who was 16 years old at the time, went there with his mother and sister and recalled: “[...] the gig ended and we had to go back. We never took a taxi, only rides. It was a bunch of young people and teenagers wanting to be hippies and have gone to the real Woodstock, and a terrified mother fearing for the safety and purity of her girls.” This reveals the complex dynamics of festivals that, under repression, promoted

[5] Available at https://www.facebook.com. Accessed on Feb 9, 2026.

convergences and cultural exchanges between diverse audiences, and are remembered with nostalgia. Tia Denora (2013, p. 4) highlights that music is deeply linked to emotional experiences. She emphasizes its ability to revive memories, stimulate social actions—both individually and collectively—and act as a structure for public memory.

From the Creation Day to Águas Claras Festival: memories and press coverage

The Creation Day, held in October 1972, resonated as a response to the traditional festival crisis. The competitive events were losing momentum due to a lack of public interest, as analyzed by Julio Hungria in *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper (Oct 18, 1972, p. 11) regarding the failure of the VII International Music Festival (FIC, VII Festival Internacional da Canção), which had been held recently: “Didn’t the low IBOPE indices tell anything to the Globo (television) director? Didn’t the average of 4,000 people attending the last lukewarm nights at Maracanãzinho mean anything to him?”

In fact, the VII FIC, held on September 30, 1972, was the last of that series, marking the end of the most remembered phase of those events on TV. The journalist’s approach referred to the influence of counterculture festivals, which privileged cooperation to the detriment of competition and promoted more horizontal and less hierarchical forms of life and artistic expressions.

Creation Day embodied the principles of horizontality and self-management that pervaded the alternative imagination. As the other festivals described in this article, its structure had eliminated juris and prizes, enabling a territory of sociability and experimentation in the Caxias Municipal Stadium: twelve hours of music shaped as a collaborative “fair”, with handcraft stalls and improvisation. Ezequiel Neves reported his experience in the column *Toque*, in the *Rolling Stone* newspaper (Nov 7, 1972, p. 2):

> I spent more than fifteen hours in a pure festive atmosphere, open fields and green grass, listening to people make music, having sex with them, living in a way I hadn’t lived in a long time. I know, deep down in my head and heart, that all the good things I experienced were just a sample of what’s about to happen in various parts of this country. I know this because young people are eager to meet, to get together and commune, to enjoy some cool music far from worries and paranoia [...] When I arrived at the Duque de Caxias Municipal Stadium I was completely blown away. Besides the main stage, there were a bunch of tents set up and people were enjoying it all as if they were returning to their childhood. And in a way they were, since all kinds of repression were completely absent. The ceiling was the open sky, the ground a huge space covered in grass. [...] I think I even played the intruder by entering uninvited into the (very oriental and with wonderful incense) tent of *Módulo Mil*. I was so out of it I couldn’t even speak, and the really cool group of

> people inside understood and sensed that. I mean, they immediately made me feel at ease.

That journalist's narrative explores multiple dimensions of the festival, associating it with both the counterculture influence and the attempt to escape the tensions of that period, thus suggesting a glimpse of a freer society. Neves also highlighted the atmosphere of the event and the casual encounters he experienced:

> I arrived there at three in the afternoon and by five I was completely crazy. It's always like that: as soon as someone puts a finger on a guitar, I go hecatombically insane. The sound hits my head and I feel like the very seed of cosmic consciousness. I wandered around freely, with that amazing sound supporting and guiding me, the sun in my face sending out the most incredible phosphorescences. I met a wonderful group from São Paulo (they arrived in Rio and went straight to Caxias, "because that's where the land of sound was," they told me). I sat on the grass and had a brilliant chat with three beautiful girls from São Paulo [...] they told me that the sound scene in São Paulo isn't doing very well, which made me quite worried. But that wasn't the time for worries, and that's why I got up and went to see a poster exhibition that was set up right near where we were. There was an incredible poster of Janis Joplin and another even more incredible one of Robert Plant. And there were also amazing tents where we could relax and chat while the sound blasted out from all directions (Rolling Stone, Nov 7, 1972, p. 2).

By describing the Creation Day as a festival where music, art and socialization intertwined, Ezequiel Neves imbues his text with an emotional and sensory charge. Beyond music, the festival offered a diversity of artistic expressions created by visual artists and artisans. There were also spaces dedicated to the sale of clothing and books.

In a text published in the readers' section of *Rolling Stone* (Dec 5, 1972, p. 33), Jamari França described his experience in the festival quoting one of the organizers, the *disc jockey* Ademir Lemos: "I am an angel. I am Ademir. I'm turning my back to prove that angels have backs. The goat is loose and will eat the whole lawn [...] I'm writing this under the skies of Caxias. Saturday, October 14. Stadium".

The illustrator and cartoonist Francisco Sebastião Vilachã attended the Creation Day, when he was 9 and reported:

> I learned about the event from Rolling Stone magazine and I remember, as if in a distant dream, Fagner singing '*Cavalo Ferro*' (Iron Horse) which was released as a single at the time... *Módulo Mil* with the classic '*Não Fale com Paredes'* (Don't speak with the walls)... the people camped on the lawn and the police troop in the stands... the trip there and back was on the 'Conexão Japeri' train (Vilachã, 2014).

One week after that event, the festival that gathered dozens of new talents was still highlighted in the article *In Caxias, sex is different*:

> Sitting on the ground, amidst tents set up on the football field, the people had sex until dawn. The squares that were there laughed at the flowers in their hair, the

> overalls and the colorful socks, things not very common in Caxias. Some, indignant, commented that they were all 'marginal' people with no future. In the end, Serguei compared the festival to Woodstock and sang 'With a little help from my friends'. And someone commented: 'He's the Joe Cocker of the poor'.[6]

The text, written in a chronicle style, demonstrates the sociocultural estrangement: recording the dissonant atmosphere composed of young people influenced by hippie culture under the skeptical gaze of the local "squares" and the moralizing disdain that labeled the participants as "marginalized." The ironic appropriation of Serguei as "the Joe Cocker of the poor" makes explicit the comparison with Woodstock, revealing the tension between the counterculture produced in the Global North and its peripheral manifestation in the Baixada Fluminense.

Jamari França ended his informal coverage of the festival with an invitation the *Rolling Stone* readers, incentivizing them to take part in other events of the same kind. In an informal and provoking way, he emphasized the Creation Day's atmosphere and questioned the absence of those who missed it:

> Everything is so beautiful. 3000 people together. Just enjoying each other's company. No worries. The only thing missing is you, the one reading this who didn't come [...] Where were you? Did you see what you missed? It was good to be in Caxias, to be far away, because only those who wanted music and not a party were there. Now promise – promise by your chilblains, by your phimosis, by your folds that next time you'll go [...] It's 3:25, the bus to Meyer is arriving. I'm going to run. Old warhorse Caxias. All my love (*Rolling Stone*, Dec 5, 1972, p. 33).

França, while questioning the readers, invited to them have fun and to strengthen the musical scenario of Rio de Janeiro, where "enjoying" in 1972 was also a subversive act.

In the same year, the First Experimental Fair of Northeast (I Feira Experimental do Nordeste) reunited 2 thousand youngsters in Brejo da Madre de Deus (Medeiros, 2022, p. 71). The audience was mainly composed of students, and came from cities such as Recife (Pernambuco), Maceió (Alagoas), João Pessoa (Paraíba), Fortaleza (Ceará) e Salvador (Bahia) by bus and hitchhiking, bringing their backpacks and tents. The option of several festivals, which were called "fairs", proposed alternative logics of consumption, sociability, and enjoyment, thus opposing the commodification of culture and leisure. At the event, water was available in a large jug and served in a common cup. Professor Dulce Chacon, then 66 years old and a member of the Pernambuco Academy of Letters, witnessed the festival and wrote in her coverage for the *Diário de Pernambuco* newspaper (Nov 17, 1972, p. 22): "In

[6] Unidentified publication found in the Rock Museum of Saquarema, where the musician Serguei used to live.

that euphoria, the medical students forgot the most rudimentary principles of hygiene, the individual body.” She went on to describe the Fair:

> In the immense field, the setting for the famous Passion of Christ and Caligula, there were young men and women completely uninhibited, in a very natural ease, sitting or lying on mats, backpacks as pillows, with the purest of intentions [...] I saw and felt the joy of that happy, relaxed, simple youth. They scandalized our grandmothers, I'm sure, incapable of understanding that life is not only responsibility, it also means joy, naturalness, peace, and human understanding (*Diário de Pernambuco*, Nov 17, 1972, p. 22).

According to Chacon, around 17 groups performed, among those were *Banda-Quebra-Resguardo, Bandavoou* and *Transa Geral*. As indicated in a communication to the youngsters, the “sound message” of the Fair should reach those who were absent. A questionnaire distributed to the participants contained the following invitation: “Answer to it brother, and give some information such as name, age, presentations, experiences. Live it. We'll be collecting it at Dawn. Use the back (of the paper) too”, reinforcing the collaborative character of the festival.

Decades later, Valdevino Pereira Neto (2013), aka Vinus, recalled his participation in the event. Being a member of the Armação Theater, he had acted as audience and performer: “I was there, with *Nuvem 33*, in a performance where I painted a picture, I do have this register”. The integration between music and visual arts was a characteristic of the group's presentations. In an article about one of the *Nuvem 33* shows, whose repertoire included songs with provoking titles such as *Polida Inconsciência* (Polished Unconsciousness) and *Ódio Mortal* (Deadly Hatred), the *Diário de Pernambuco* newspaper (Dec 4, 1972, p. 17) highlighted: “*Nuvem 33* continues to reach out to visual artists from Pernambuco, specifically, to obtain donations to set up a creative audiovisual laboratory”.

Three years later, the “fair” environment would remain in open air festivals. The *Pop* magazine (Feb 1975, p. 68-69) described the routine in Águas Claras as follows:

> [...] In the late afternoon, before the music started, half a dozen long-haired guys circulated among the stalls, spreading good vibes with the sound of their flutes. By this time, an efficient barter system was already operating between the stalls: food for cigarettes, t-shirts for water, and so on. Those with money stocked up at the stalls. Those who didn't have any got everything through friendship [...] on Friday morning, when the festival officially began, there was already a veritable city of colorful stalls set up in the pastures. And to serve it, an efficient infrastructure of restrooms, stalls with food and soft drinks, a first-aid station, and even an improvised shower in the Águas Claras stream.

The amateur journalist Carlos Alberto (2017) was tasked with covering the event for his city's newspaper, and he recounted his experience in Iacanga: "We showered in an improvised shower and took the opportunity to meet people. There were people from all over Brazil. I met a guy who came from Peru just for the festival." Carlos's experience expresses the community-oriented nature and the power of attraction that characterized those festivals, even though they were marked by evident organizational weaknesses resulting from amateurism, the marginalization of countercultural expressions, police repression, and limitations in media coverage.

Celsão, who was 19 at the time, highlighted the experience lived in Águas Claras: "I camped for four or five days and was one of the last people to leave that place because of how peaceful it was" (*Revista do Brasil*, Oct 2009, p. 40). And continued:

> We entered [the festival] through the woods, in a group of about 10 or 12. We came out through the woods and went back in through the woods. Passing through pasture, woods, until we reached the farm. We arrived there a bit bruised. All scratched up from cat scratchers, there were a lot of cat scratchers. There was bamboo and we went through everything to be able to get there. Then we arrived at the festival, there were a lot of people camping, people taking naked baths in the waterfall (Mancha, 2025).

His narrative shows that the transgression of entering the event through the woods is associated with the search for a free community. In Celsão's memory, the festival emerges as a territory of freedom and sharing.

Sétima Lua, who was 19 ast the time, traveled from São Paulo to Iacanga with her boyfriend and recalled:

> We arrived there 15 days before the event. There wasn't anybody there yet. Then, we got a black tarp and put up a little tent. It seemed to me that it was a huge brotherhood meeting [...] In that cycle, many freedom of thought doors were available, evoking countercultural ideals (*Revista do Brasil,* Oct 2009, p. 41).

She added: "We put up a kind of collective kitchen with those black tarps. It sheltered a kind of food storage area there, a small campfire, and pots for cooking. When I woke up, there was always something warm to drink" (Cheixas, 2025). This experience led her to settle in the city, where she had three children. In July 2025, she was one of the organizers of a luau commemorating the 50th anniversary of the event in a camping area in Iacanga, bringing together festival enthusiasts and people who participated in the Águas Claras chapters in the 1970s and 1980s.

Celsão also emphasized the collectivity experience: “We used to arrange a place to sleep, with some tents that were there, and we had a little fire in the middle. Somebody would bring some bread for us to eat, and we formed this kind of brotherhood, an incredible fraternity.” He completed “[...] we would sing, have fun, drink, and smoke. We protested [...] I was happy, and everybody who went there was happy” (Mancha, 2025).

Celsão’s and Sétima Lua’s memories depict Águas Claras as a place of affective memory (Nora, 1993), whose construction was supported by the symbol of an alternative community. In their narratives, past experiences merge with countercultural ideals, transforming the festival into the archetype of freedom longed for by a segment of the generation, and bringing to the surface memories of extraordinary moments that broke with the everyday routine.

In this regard, Geisa Adriana (2025) participated in the Águas Claras festival when she was 16 years old and worked as a typist. During the festival, she received a marriage proposal, and recorded: “We went using my future father-in-law’s *corcel* (a Ford model), and we were seven people. I was the only girl [...] Eating meant trading a can of sardines for a joint and vice versa, taking a cold shower, but the friendships were genuine and everything was shared.” Following this perspective, Carlos Roberto de Almeida (2025) reports that he went to the festival on a chartered bus that left from São Caetano do Sul and was nicknamed “Marijuana Express:”

> Total chaos! Rain, mud, food preparation, the festival atmosphere, freedom to do whatever you wanted. I wasn’t worried about anything [...] No planning whatsoever, just each person having their own personal experience. There was concern about repression. We knew there was a lot of infiltration.

Nico Queiroz (2025) is another young individual who went to Águas Claras:

> My life was, is, and will be music. I worked in record labels, production, consulting, I lived with *Os Mutantes* doing *Tudo Foi Feito Pelo Sol* (Everything was Made by the Sun), etc., etc., and so on. I wrote for all the rock magazines. The high point of all this was, without a doubt, the Iacanga festivals. My memory is lost in time, I don’t remember dates, but the facts remain. At the first festival, I went as an Official Fan and helped out at Toninho Peticov’s natural food stall. The first festival was, so to speak, a rustic journey, with improvisation and adventure.

Nico’s report, emphasizing experimentation, collective work and the role of “official fan”, expresses recurrent dynamics of those festivals. Marked by values of communion and solidarity, those experiences expanded the use of sound in public spaces, thus challenging previously set norms. From Richard Middleton’s (1990, p. 253) typology, festivals revealed

ritual dimensions, such as the construction of collective solidarity and the critical perception of everyday issues, including political values, materialized in the affirmation of dissident identities and forms of opposition. Such dynamics evidenced that in a period of repression, there were breaches, enabling alternative ways of expression and sociability.

Drugs, including alcoholic beverages were closely related to sociability and rebellion. Celsão recalled:

> [The police] were arresting people for drug possession. Yeah, people were really using drugs. I wasn't a big fan of hard drugs, but we never refused a joint [...] there were a lot of mushrooms of the Psilocybe cubensis genus, which grows on the dung of zebu cattle, cow dung. So, there was a lot of that. People learned to recognize the good stuff and started eating it (Mancha, 2025).

He continued: "There was a still near Reginópolis, and I remember there was a guy who would bring two jugs of cachaça every time we went. Every time he went, he'd call me to go with him. We'd go there to get the cachaça." (Mancha, 225).

The musical and behavioral repertoire observed in those events, distinct from the one predominating in radios and popular TV programs, revealed the existence of a significant audience in the country for rock and its experimental offshoots.

Final Considerations

As evidenced throughout the article, festivals were spaces of resistance, functioning as a "release valve" and refuge in the context of the military dictatorship (Kaminski, 2013, p. 69). The testimony of Geraldo Viveiros, a participant in the second edition of Águas Claras (1981), synthesizes this dimension, even though his statement was made during a period of greater political openness:

> Most of the people came here because of this oppression, the chaos of this everyday life. Blokes came here to look for freedom, and being complete, integral. Humans live a life of exploitation and then when something like that appears, a break, they open their minds and show that the world hasn't hit rock bottom yet, that it's possible to believe in humanity. Freedom, isn't it? That's the only thing humanity should value above everything else (*Movimento*, Sep 14, 1981).

The protests were not only manifested in the rejection of the dictatorship, but also through popular practices and procedures that subverted moral, aesthetic, and behavioral norms: drug use, sexual freedom, the "uninhibited" aesthetic (long hair, colorful clothes), hitchhiking, the formation of hippie camps and fairs, and music outside of radio standards.

These examples constituted ways of challenging conservative rigidity, bringing to light a network of anti-discipline (Certeau, 1998, p. 42).

Thus, by "playing" with the control mechanisms by refusing to conform, festival-goers employed what Michel de Certeau (1998, p. 42) called "arts of doing": strategies and tactics of ordinary individuals who challenge and reconfigure dominant structures. Throughout the article, several of these arts were identified in their practices.

Despite not representing an organized political project, those diffuse protests were expressed in everyday practices that challenged the moral boundaries of the regime. Through countercultural community experience, young people expanded their horizons of expectation regarding freedom, projecting utopias and possible futures.

The unique aspect of attending those festivals lies in the fusion between the journey to get there, with its dimension as a rite of passage, and immersion in an alternative social microcosm. Such community-based interaction, marked by experiences of engagement, allowed those events to be something more than a series of shows that made up a spectacle. Music, an element also present offstage, sometimes transcended the function of a spectacle to be consumed, acting as one of the central components of sociability. This took place, among other ways, in gatherings with guitars, flutes, percussion, and singing that extended throughout the day.

The temporary enclave, marked by a sense of autonomy and the experimentation of new subjectivities, operated a suspension of routine, signaling other possibilities of existence during the military dictatorship. This condition distinguished the countercultural manifestations in the country from experiences in North America or Europe. This is because, in addition to greater budgetary, logistical, and technical limitations, the constant action of the dictatorship's repressive apparatus incorporated specific political dimensions into the conflicts related to Brazilian festivals.

The analysis carried out revealed that the resistance to dictatorship was not limited to the traditionally fields consecrated by historiography such as the formal politics, armed fight, or Brazilian Music Festivals. It was also expressed by means of practices in which contracultural festivals emerged as spaces of experimentation and dissidence.

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