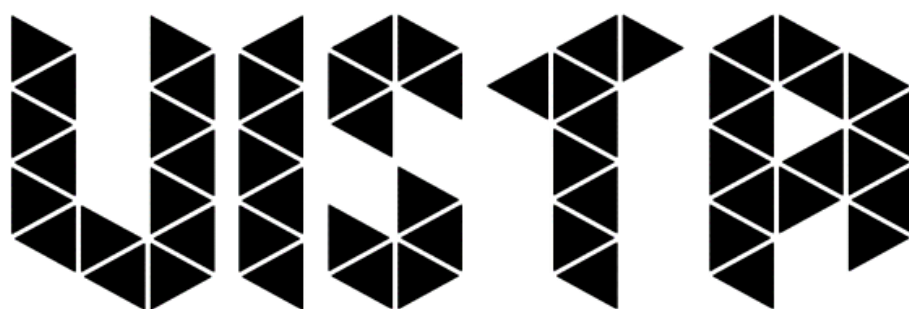




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“Vida Loka Parte II” by Racionais MC’s: The Music Video as an Audiovisual Narrative of Resistance to Racism

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“VIDA LOKA PARTE II” BY RACIONAIS MC’S: THE MUSIC VIDEO AS AN AUDIOVISUAL NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE TO RACISM

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the music video for the song “Vida Loka Parte II” (Street Outlaw Part II) by the Brazilian rap group Racionais MC’s, which, 21 years after its television release, continues to be viewed and discussed on YouTube. The study seeks to understand the meanings mobilised by the music video and how it connects sensory experiences of viewing with social interactions on networks, establishing a dialogue between aesthetics and politics. The analysis combines social semiotics of visual communication and film analysis to identify visualities and soundscapes related to the anti-racist struggle in Brazil (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2023; Penafria, 2009). The study of the video’s reception was conducted through netnography to understand how audience engagement produces shared meanings and reinforces a sense of belonging to a community that continues to combat racism and to claim representativeness and social justice (Kozinets, 2020). The results indicate that the music video operates as an aesthetic device of cultural resistance. The comments highlight audience interpretation and the circulation of the work, reinforcing its status and its relevance in the debate on racial and social issues in Brazil.

KEYWORDS

visual culture, music video, racism, Racionais MC’s, netnography

“VIDA LOKA PARTE II” DOS RACIONAIS MC’S: O VIDEOCLÍPE COMO NARRATIVA AUDIOVISUAL DE RESISTÊNCIA AO RACISMO

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o videoclipe da canção “Vida Loka Parte II”, do grupo de rap brasileiro Racionais MC’s, que, 21 anos após o seu lançamento na televisão, continua a ser assistido e comentado no YouTube. O estudo busca compreender os sentidos mobilizados pelo videoclipe e como ele conecta experiências sensíveis do olhar e interações sociais nas redes e estabelece um diálogo entre estética e política. A análise combina a sociosemiótica visual e a análise fílmica, identificando visualidades e sonoridades relacionadas à luta antirracista no Brasil (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2023; Penafria, 2009). O estudo sobre a recepção do videoclipe foi realizado através da netnografia, com o intuito de compreender como o engajamento do público produz sentidos compartilhados e reforça o pertencimento a uma comunidade que continua a combater o racismo.

e a reivindicar representatividade e justiça social (Kozinets, 2020). Os resultados apontam que o videoclipe atua como um dispositivo estético de resistência cultural. Os comentários evidenciam a interpretação do público e circulação da obra, reforçando seu estatuto e sua relevância no debate sobre questões raciais e sociais no Brasil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

cultura visual, videoclipe, racismo, Racionais MC's, netnografia

INTRODUCTION

The music video for the song "Vida Loka Parte II" (Street Outlaw Part II, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>), by the group Racionais MC's, directed by Kátia Lund and released in 2004 on the album *Nada Como um Dia Após o Outro Dia* (Nothing Like a Day After Another Day), addresses social and racial inequalities in Brazil (Santos & Mendonça, 2019). Understood as a gesture of resistance and political positioning, the work amplifies, at the audiovisual level, a critique of historically naturalised forms of violence (Quijano, 2000/2019).

More than two decades after its television broadcast, the music video remains in circulation in digital environments, particularly on YouTube, where it continues to attract views and discussion. This article proposes analysing the meanings mobilised by this audience, considering their persistence and reactivation over time, especially following their availability on the group's official channel.

To this end, the study combines netnography, focused on interactions and comments on the platform, with analysis of the music video, in dialogue with film analysis and social semiotics of visual communication (Kozinets, 2020). We sought to identify visualities, framings, rhythms, and aesthetic choices related to narratives of resistance and the anti-racist struggle in Brazil, and to understand how these meanings are updated in practices of reception and circulation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2023; Penafria, 2009).

The results indicate that the work operates as an aesthetic and political device, articulating narratives of authenticity, resistance, and memory. The comments highlight modes of interpretation, reappropriation, and circulation that reinforce its cultural status and relevance to racial and social issues. In this process, aesthetic, sonic, and narrative elements stand out, structuring the music video's experience and intensifying its critical dimension.

VISUAL CULTURE AND MUSIC VIDEOS: FROM TELEVISION TO THE WEB

RAP MUSIC VIDEOS AS A SPACE OF CONTESTATION

The emergence of the music video cannot be reduced to a specific historical milestone, as the format already existed in a dispersed manner, constituting a cultural form

in transformation since the mid-1970s, before the term became established in the media and entered media vocabulary (Holzbach, 2013). Produced at the intersection between musical and audiovisual culture, the earliest music videos were created both to construct artists' public image and to give visual form to their songs (Carvalho & Serelle, 2015). In this context, the song assumes a central role, as it is from it that innovative decisions may emerge, making the music video the result of a set of aesthetic and narrative choices made by artists and directors, revealing critical positions and ways of symbolically intervening in the audiovisual space (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2023).

MTV launched in the United States in 1981 and quickly became the primary platform for music video circulation. The channel shaped the music video as a television genre, defining which audiovisual practices should or should not be incorporated into its format, thereby institutionalising it (Mittell, 2004). From the early 1980s onwards, a "music video culture" emerged, reshaping practices and references within global youth popular culture (Holzbach, 2013).

In Brazil, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, rap music videos were first broadcast on MTV Brasil, signalling a significant shift in the channel's positioning and bringing into television images of the periphery, discourses, and narratives that articulated music, identity, and urban context (Soares, 2009). Examples of this process include "Diário de um Detento" (Diary of an Inmate, 1998) by Racionais MC's, directed by Maurício Eça and Marcelo Corpani, and "A Minha Alma (A Paz que Eu Não Quero)" (My Soul [The Peace I Do Not Want], 1999) by O Rappa, directed by Kátia Lund and Breno Silveira.

In 2005, the creation of the digital platform YouTube was crucial to transformations in the cultural form of the music video (Zanetti & Belo, 2012). The platform enabled the free uploading and access to a wide range of videos circulating online, giving young people a more active role in communication and attracting the interest of production companies (Nercolini & Holzbach, 2009). Furthermore, it enabled older music videos to be recirculated, allowing them to "re-emerge" on the platform, understood as a "genuine digital, global and contemporary archive of popular culture" (Costa, 2014, p. 133). The analysis of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", released in 2004, is situated within this context. The video illustrates how productions originally conceived for television can acquire new layers of circulation and interpretation when migrating to the digital environment (Nercolini & Holzbach, 2009).

In the online environment, music videos benefit from greater creative freedom, allowing artists to take political stances and engage directly with their audiences (Gomes, 2019). An example of this dynamic is the music video "A Coisa Tá Preta" (Things Are Getting Serious, 2016) by Rincon Sapiência, which re-signifies the expression in its title and adopts an affirmative aesthetic linked to Blackness and peripheral youth (Santos & Mendonça, 2020). Although different from "Vida Loka Parte II", this case illustrates how rap music videos explore new political and aesthetic possibilities in the digital environment, expanding their role as spaces of visibility and resistance.

The three rap music videos mentioned above, as well as others circulated both on television and on the internet, such as "Triunfo" (Triumph, 2008) by Emicida, released

across both platforms, exemplify how rap music videos can be understood as spaces of cultural resistance and political contestation (Nardini, 2026). By presenting versions of lived reality in Brazilian cities and highlighting structural inequalities, these videos also mobilise shared references, particularly those related to young people's experiences in urban contexts (Soares, 2009).

In this context, it becomes possible to observe how such productions articulate critiques of racism and its social implications. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the music video "Fight the Power" by the US group Public Enemy, directed by Spike Lee and broadcast on MTV in the United States in 1989, which stands out for explicitly addressing anti-racist struggle and activism in a groundbreaking way within the format. From that point onwards, an expansion of such approaches can be observed in different productions within the genre, which increasingly incorporate racial and social issues into their narratives (Nardini, 2026).

The set of these transformations shows that the music video, as it migrates from television to the digital environment, reaffirms its role as a space of aesthetic and political experimentation, capable of giving visibility to marginalised experiences and articulating memory, critique, and resistance (Gomes, 2019). In Brazilian rap, this expanded circulation enables artists to address racism and social inequalities more directly, consolidating the genre as an important vehicle of cultural resistance (Santos & Mendonça, 2020). This intersection of aesthetic practice, digital circulation, and political engagement shapes the role of the music video as a tool for rendering urgent debates visible.

ANTI-RACIST STRUGGLE IN BRAZIL AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF RESISTANCE

Quijano (2000/2019) emphasises that the discursive construction of the idea of "race" deepened pre-existing inequalities and operates through a system of exclusion and domination, demonstrating its mutability and adaptability across different historical moments, which characterises the persistence of the coloniality of power. Although discredited, so-called "scientific racism" gave way to the naturalisation of the idea of "race" in common sense, functioning as a "foundation and legitimisation of colonialism and the brutal, intentional and systematic discrimination of human beings based on skin colour" (Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019, p. 18).

According to Kilomba (2008), racism manifests itself in the construction of difference associated with hierarchisation and the exercise of power: "one is not different, one becomes different through the process of discrimination" (p. 42). The author argues that this differentiation becomes a marker of "inferiority", "devaluation", and "dishonour" (p. 42). Racism can be expressed in structural, institutional, and everyday forms, rendering the Black and/or racialised subject not only the "Other", but also "the embodiment of what white society has repressed" (Kilomba, 2008, p. 44).

Genocidal practices directed at the Black population in Brazil did not cease with the abolition of slavery but were historically reconfigured (Nascimento, 1978). In this context, Abdias do Nascimento defines "genocide" as the denial of the right to existence of

human groups and the implementation of deliberate, systematic, and calculated measures aimed at the extermination of a group and/or the destruction of its culture, stressing that silence in the face of this process is equivalent to its "endorsement".

According to González (1988), "Brazilian cultural neurosis has racism as its quintessential symptom" (p. 69). The author already drew attention to the mistaken idea of racial democracy in Brazil. To challenge it, it is necessary to tear away the "ideological veil of whitening" (p. 69), which is responsible for devaluing, minimising, and erasing the contributions of Black and Indigenous peoples in the country's historical and cultural formation. This formulation directly dialogues with Kilomba's (2008) discussion on the construction of difference through the stigmatisation of certain groups.

González (2020) highlights that the struggle of the Black movement in Brazil dates back to the arrival of the first enslaved Africans, just as Indigenous movements have resisted since the earliest colonial invasions, although these histories are rarely taught. Among the examples of resistance are Palmares and, more recently, the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement), founded in 1978. For authors such as Félix (2006), the hip-hop movement is understood as a continuation of this struggle, placing Black and peripheral youth at the centre of political debates and "provoking an oxygenation" of public discourse (Bastos, 2020, p. 71). It is important to note that rap music is part of this movement.

Sodré (2019) highlights the importance of actions and organisations aimed at raising awareness in the field of communication, whether through media, encounters, or institutional actions. For the author, it is through this process of awareness-raising that the deepest layers of society's subjective and affective dynamics are reached, demonstrating that understanding the logic of slavery embedded within the social fabric is fundamental to the development of consistent anti-racist strategies.

For Leitão (2004), film is a cultural product shaped by a "mediated frame" (p. 50), through which urban spaces are represented and symbolised. This visual construction of cities in audiovisual media can highlight contrasts and structural inequalities, mobilising affect and enhancing forms of engagement with the narratives presented (Baltar, 2009). This experiential dimension of urban space is also central to other forms of audiovisual production, such as the music video, which reinscribes urban experience from situated perspectives, often shaped by racial, social, and cultural markers (Nardini & Macedo, 2025; Siqueira, 2010).

"VIDA LOKA PARTE II": MEANINGS, NARRATIVES, AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

In this section, we present the music video "Vida Loka Parte II" by Racionais MC's, contextualising the group's work, the music video's setting, its interpretations, the image analysis, and its online reception. To this end, this section follows a methodological approach divided into three stages. The first consists of a documentary analysis of articles published in scientific journals and of the song lyrics. The second stage is dedicated to image analysis, drawing on contributions from visual social semiotics and film analysis,

considering that these approaches provide appropriate tools for understanding the visual meanings produced by the music video (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2023; Penafria, 2009). The third stage consists of a netnography investigating interactions and comments posted on YouTube, enabling understanding of how these data relate to audience sentiments and the reception of the music video (Kozinets, 2020).

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SOCIAL SEMIOTICS AND FILM ANALYSIS

Social semiotics, also known as "social semiology", is defined by Gunther Kress (2010) as "a theory that deals with *meaning* in all its appearances, in all social occasions and in all cultural sites" (p. 2). In visual culture studies, it can serve both as a theoretical approach — enabling, for example, the understanding of discourses and ideologies associated with images — and as a method for analysing the particularities of visual constructions (Kress, 2010). Through visual social semiotics, we examine the functions images fulfil as parts of a communicational system that simultaneously performs three functions.

For the analysis of the music video, a set of elements was examined using visual social semiotics and film analysis, the latter mobilised as a complementary method. Regarding film analysis, Penafria (2009) emphasises that there is no specific and/or universally accepted methodology, but highlights two fundamental stages: the breakdown of the film and the interpretation of the relationships between its elements within the overall composition. For the analysis of the music video, contextual, technical, and aesthetic elements were considered (editing, shots, camera angles, colour, lighting, depth of field, and sound representation), as well as representational elements (characterisation of the characters, activities, attitudes, settings, and objects) and symbolic elements (metaphors, symbols, and the arrangement of elements; Journot, 2002/2020).

In visual social semiotics, the interpersonal dimension is particularly relevant, as it enables an understanding of both the interactions between the characters and the type of contact the image establishes with the viewer. In this sense, the viewer is understood as a position of observation produced by the image itself, being continuously interpellated by visual resources that guide specific forms of engagement and interpretation (Mota-Ribeiro, 2011).

CAPÃO REDONDO, 1983: A BRIEF CONTEXTUALISATION

To understand "Vida Loka Parte II", it is essential to situate Capão Redondo's neighbourhood during the 1980s and 1990s. Santos and Mendonça (2019) highlight the documentary character of the music video by foregrounding the poverty, violence, and neglect experienced by residents. In this context, the authors note that, having been considered by the United Nations "the most violent neighbourhood in the world in the 1980s and 1990s, due to homicide rates comparable to those of countries in civil war", childhood in Capão Redondo "could hardly have been colourful" (Santos & Mendonça, 2019, p. 59).

The song includes a Part I, in which Mano Brown speaks on the phone with Abraão, possibly a friend or acquaintance in prison. During the conversation, Brown laments the death of Abraão's father, comments on life "in the hood", and reflects on his recent experiences. Santos and Mendonça (2019) emphasise the importance of understanding the meaning of the term "vida loka" (street outlaw), used to refer to:

someone who has entered a life of crime because they no longer perceive any hope in life — dying, living, being imprisoned, or committing crimes all carry the same symbolic value. There is no judgment, since they will be forgiven by God, who will understand the circumstances in which the *Vida Loka* found themselves. (Santos & Mendonça, 2019, p. 56)

Both songs by Racionais MC's contain biblical names and references: Abraão (Abraham) in Part I and Dimas (Dismas) in Part II. According to the lyrics of the latter, Dimas is considered the first *vida loka* in history. As Santos and Mendonça (2019) explain, "known as the Good Thief, in the Gospel of Luke, he was one of the thieves crucified alongside Jesus who repented of his sins and was the first to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (p. 56). In the song lyrics, we hear/read:

while the common folk stoned the cross / and the uniformed scoundrel spat on Jesus / at the very end of the second half, repentant / saved and forgiven is Dismas, the bandit / the thing is crazy, it sends chills down your spine / Dismas, the first *vida loka* in history / I say: glory, glory, I know God is here / and only those who are, only those who are will feel it.

The previous quotation demonstrates how the music video's narrative draws close to everyday life, making it more easily understood by those who share certain cultural and linguistic references. Expressions such as "common folk", "at the very end of the second half" — referring to the final moments of a football match — and "the thing is crazy" function as linguistic bridges. They connect the music video's narrative to the audience's everyday experiences, reinforcing a sense of familiarity and authenticity while also strengthening the connection between the story being told and life in the urban communities portrayed.

"The video's script, much like the narrative of the lyrics, addresses the issue of the young Black and low-income individual's entry into a life of crime, with a strongly critical tone" (Martins, 2014, p. 155). According to Martins (2014), distorted or superficial interpretations of the reality portrayed in the music video, mostly promoted by mainstream media outlets, led to the mistaken perception that the work constituted an apology for crime. The historical criminalisation of rap, as well as other artistic expressions associated with the hip-hop movement, reveals a structural lack of understanding regarding racism and its mechanisms of perpetuation within Brazilian society.

As discussed below, "Vida Loka Parte II" demonstrates how the use of hybrid languages produces new meanings in audiovisual production, enabling this artistic

expression to reveal complex dimensions of Brazilian society (Santos & Mendonça, 2019). This perspective, which brings together narrative, music, and social representation, is connected to the trajectory of filmmaker Kátia Lund, whose work seeks to portray the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of urban peripheries while articulating forms of activism and social critique through audiovisual media.

The analysis was organised into three major sequences, from which we selected scenes relevant to this article. These scenes portray childhood in Capão Redondo and reflect the neighbourhood's complex dynamics, police approaches in peripheral urban areas, the role of the press, the search for salvation through rap and the word of God, among other central elements highlighted in this study.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

SEQUENCE 1: SÃO PAULO, 1983

The first sequence runs from 00:00 to 02:07 (Figure 1). The music video begins in 1983. In the opening images, we see two young men walking along a dirt road. The camera follows their movements through a *tracking shot*¹. One of them carries a boom-box, a characteristic 1980s object symbolic of the hip-hop movement and urban culture (Teperman, 2015). By observing the setting, we notice that the road is unpaved, indicating it is not an urban space with paved streets. This reveals the State's neglect of that region (Santos & Mendonça, 2019). The long shot introduces the dialogue between the two young men and three children in Capão Redondo. In this framing, unfinished houses and overgrown areas are evident, elements of the setting that further reveal the region's neglect. This is followed by the caption "São Paulo, 1983".

¹ "A tracking shot consists of the movement of the camera through space. It can be achieved through a wide variety of means, ranging from a rail-mounted dolly to a car or a handheld camera" (Journot, 2002/2020, p. 188).



Figure 1. Frames from the first sequence of the music video “Vida Loka Parte II”, by Racionais MC’s

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:00:02–00:00:24, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

The children wear simpler clothing and footwear, and one of them is wearing a Brazilian national football team shirt. In this scene, the colour red becomes particularly prominent (Figure 2). The image is not entirely sharp, a device that evokes the past and reinforces the narrative’s dimension of memory. One of the children dances to the music until the group is approached by some young men who claim that a life of crime enables access to better clothes, fashionable items, and entry into the dance parties, considered the major parties of the period.



Figure 2. Frames from the first sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from *Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD)*, by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:00:25–00:00:35, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

The young men are visually enhanced through low-angle shots, in contrast to the high-angle shots used at certain moments to portray the children. Furthermore, the close-up shots of the children's faces intensify the scene's dramatic character, seeking to convey their emotions in response to the questions posed by the group of young men. Drawing on the assumptions of Marcel Martin (1955/2005), the high-angle shot tends to diminish the individual, "making them an object carried along by a kind of determinism impossible to overcome, a plaything of fate" (p. 5). In contrast, the low-angle shot films the individual from below, magnifying them. This aligns with what Kilomba (2008/2010) explains about racism when she argues that one is not born different, but rather becomes different through a process of discrimination that subordinates the individual.

Another character who appears subsequently is the photographer (Figure 3). He is shown in an area surrounded by overgrown vegetation, dressed in formal clothing. It is to him that one of the young men requests a photograph, claiming to have money to

pay for the service. The high-angle and low-angle shots highlight the power relationship established at that moment, now mediated by purchasing power (Martin, 1955/2005). The photographer's face shows no emotional involvement with the scene he witnesses, suggesting detachment from that reality.



Figure 3. Frames from the first sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:00:49–00:00:59, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

We also draw attention to external actors who document crimes in the community while remaining largely disengaged from efforts to address residents' problems. In "Homem na Estrada" (Man on the Road), Racionais MC's reinforce this critique when they sing that "even the IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] passed through here and never came back (and never came back). They counted the shacks, asked a load of questions, and soon after forgot about it" (Racionais MC's, 1993, 00:01:54). The photograph is then taken and reappears at another moment in the music video, interweaving the narratives portrayed there. These elements reveal traces of the inequalities that structure this space. Moreover, the neglect of Capão Redondo is underpinned by the systematic denial of basic rights to the Black population, as Abdias do Nascimento (1978) argues. The presence of the photographer thus signals a pattern of fleeting visibility, in which his role is limited to documentation, without necessarily contributing to any improvement in the living conditions of the local community.

Santos and Mendonça (2019) highlight the mother's presence in the opening minutes of the music video (Figure 4). The role of women in the survival of children and young people is foregrounded as the character walks through the overgrown terrain, carrying several bags. Apparently exhausted, her presence adds further complexity to

the narrative, as she is the one who interrupts the dialogue and drives the boys away. The children then help her, while the young men withdraw from the scene. We see two children and the mother of one of them walking toward their home. The camera pans, without movement along its axis, following this trajectory from the top of a wall. In the dialogue that unfolds, the mother makes clear that she does not want her son to become involved with the young men who have taken up a life of crime. Her role in everyday survival and resistance is evident in this gesture of protection and guidance, through which she seeks to distance her son from trajectories marked by crime and violence, even in a context of precarity that limits her possible choices (Santos & Mendonça, 2019).



Figure 4. Frames from the first sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:01:14–00:01:33, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

In the following sequence, the camera follows the two children as they pass by a shop, and one of them decides to ask the sales assistant the price of a pair of All Star trainers. The sales assistant not only ignores the child but also has the store security guard expel them (Figure 5). A close-up shot emphasises the character's sadness. It is also noticeable that the camera frames the child's face from above, creating a high-angle shot.



Figure 5. Frames from the first sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:01:50–00:02:05, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

In another moment of the narrative, there is a similar scene, also set in a shop, but this time the child is an adult, with a different outcome. This scene further illustrates how technical choices can render power relations visible in the film's sensory experience (Marcel Martin, 1955/2005). Once again, we observe how discrimination forms part of the children's everyday reality within the scene.

SEQUENCE 2: CAPÃO REDONDO, 2004

The second sequence runs from 00:02:08 to 00:04:51. After portraying aspects of childhood and adolescence in Capão Redondo during the 1980s, the narrative shifts to 2004, with the characters presented as the main figures now in adulthood. It is important to note that not all characters are immediately recognisable in this time shift; nevertheless, their life trajectories remain articulated through visual, narrative, and sound-based devices. The footage is visually sharper, although the opening scenes of this sequence are set at night.

As in the first sequence, life in Capão Redondo continues to be observed, now from different angles and settings (Figure 6). A man watches a gathering of friends through binoculars, while other scenes in this sequence feature elements associated with surveillance and street-level tension. In one of them, Brown appears at a public telephone, with a suspicious gaze, alert to what is happening in the street. When a motorcycle with two passengers approaches, the narrative's rhythm intensifies the sense of discomfort and estrangement. In the song, Brown states: "I sleep ready for war / and I wasn't like this, I feel hatred / and I know what is bad for me / what can I do, it is like this / crazy street life / the smell is gunpowder / and I prefer roses" (00:03:05–00:03:17).



Figure 6. Frames from the second sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – *Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD)*, by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:02:58–00:03:13, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

In the second sequence, a scene shows Brown imagining a different future (Figure 7). In a grassy setting with trees and flowers, he envisions himself ageing peacefully alongside a woman and two children. His dream is interrupted by Ice Blue, who calls him back to reality and reveals Capão Redondo, as reflected in the lyrics: "how, how, Brown / wake up, good brother / this is Capão Redondo, tru, not Pokémon / the south zone is, instead, concentrated stress / a wounded heart per square metre" (00:03:28–00:03:40).



Figure 7. Frames from the second sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:03:21–00:03:31, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

In the following scenes, we follow life in Capão Redondo through a non-linear narrative, with intercut images and no rigid scene boundaries. This procedure, characteristic of the music video form, is organised according to a montage logic that articulates fragments coherently, thereby guiding the viewer's gaze (Arlindo Machado, 2000). In this context, critical and ideological dimensions emerge, while the alternation between performance and participation reinforces the documentary character of the music video.

The song is interrupted during a police stop of the car in which Mano Brown is travelling with other passengers (Figure 8). The music ceases with the sound of sirens and a voice ordering "stop, stop", resuming shortly afterwards. The lyrics themselves had already anticipated this situation, suggesting how discrimination and prejudice operate. Thus, the scene does not appear as an isolated episode but as an expression of recurring practices that affect specific bodies and territories, thereby revealing racism (Abdias do Nascimento, 1978).



Figure 8. Frames from the second sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:04:26–00:04:40, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

SEQUENCE 3: MEMORY, PRISON AND REDEMPTION

The third sequence runs from 00:04:52 to 00:08:23 and revisits one of the young men from the beginning of the music video, now incarcerated (Figure 9). When observing the photograph taken with the group, displayed in black and white while he appears in colour, this visual device anchors the character's recognition throughout the narrative. A temporal shift marks his transition from adolescence to adulthood, evidenced by changes in his facial features during a prison scene. He subsequently receives a visit from his mother and his son, a relationship suggested by the lyrics accompanying the scene. The photograph reappears as a central element of identification, functioning as a trace of the past and a narrative thread in the character's trajectory.



Figure 9. Frames from the third sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:04:53–00:05:09, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

In this sequence, the lyrics develop the story of Dimas, presented as the first *vida loka*. Mano Brown appears singing at night in the streets, filmed with a cross in the background, an element associated with the so-called parish church. The scene is intercut with images of Edi Rock and KL Jay, also members of the group, performing the song in an indoor setting (Figure 10). On the wall in the background, images of Bob Marley, Malcolm X, and Tupac appear — figures historically associated with political resistance and Black culture (Gravato, 2017).



Figure 10. Frames from the third sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:05:18–00:05:31, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

When Mano Brown delivers the verse about his "guerreiros de fé" (warriors of faith), he appears surrounded by a group of men walking together, visually reinforcing notions of collectivity and belonging (Figure 11). In this context, the figure of Mano Brown and Racionais MC's assumes a referential role for many young people, bringing these lived experiences closer to public debate on inequality and mobilising processes of social awareness (Félix, 2006). This dimension will be revisited in the netnographic analysis, particularly in relation to how audiences establish connections with the group.



Figure 11. Frames from the third sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:05:37–00:05:49, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

Subsequently, the music video presents images of everyday life in the periphery: a shot of feet walking through the night, and another framing Mano Brown as he sings, surrounded by the houses of Capão Redondo (Figure 12). We then see the young man after

his release from prison, walking through the streets of São Paulo. As he moves through the city, he is startled by motorcycles passing at high speed and closely observes the urban space around him. As in the lyrics, the final part of the music video emphasises religion as a possible path to salvation, associated with forgiveness. The Bible in his hands can be read as a symbol of a new direction in life, marked by an attempt at renewal.



Figure 12. Frames from the third sequence of the music video "Vida Loka Parte II", by Racionais MC's

Source. Retrieved from Racionais – Vida Loka II (Official Video – HD), by Racionais TV, 2013, 00:06:57–00:07:17, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu5kcgz73TY>)

YOUTUBE, NETNOGRAPHY AND AUDIENCE RECEPTION

In this study, we draw on transformative netnography, understood as an extension of the method that develops "explicitly and intentionally in relation to social media affordances providing dispossessed persons with voice, inclusion, consciousness raising and catalysis" (Kozinets et al., 2024, p. 2300). In this sense, netnographic immersion is not limited to reading online content but also involves exploring interactions and networks among social actors, enabling an understanding of the context of contributions and the identification of relevant nuances for analysis.

Our analysis of comments does not adopt an approach centred on individual social actors, nor does it seek to encompass the "whole". Rather, the aim is to categorise comments thematically, identifying narratives that circulate between the particular and the "more particular" (Latour et al., 2012, p. 599). To emulate the way users access video pages on YouTube, the identification of these narratives considered the platform's two comment display modes: "newest" and "top", as selected by YouTube. It is important to note that these parameters may change over time. Accordingly, our netnographic analysis reflects the specific context of the period under study, up to December 2025. On this

basis, the following thematic categories were defined: (a) real rap; (b) reflection of reality; (c) personal narratives; (d) emotional response; (e) appreciation of the music/video; (f) context-external comments; (g) religious themes; (h) check-in comments; (i) negative comments; and (j) others.

The analytical categories reflect recurring and interdependent narrative clusters in the reception of the music video. From a broader exploratory reading of the comments, we identified highly consistent patterns of meaning that, although distinct, form part of a shared interpretative circuit. The notion of “real rap” is associated with perceptions of a “reflection of reality” and opens space for personal narratives, in which memories, life trajectories, and biographical episodes are mobilised as markers of authenticity. This movement is often accompanied by expressions of emotion and by aesthetic appreciation of the music and video, frequently described as a work, an anthem, or a classic. In parallel, identity and belonging framings emerge, including comments from users outside hip-hop contexts and religious interpretations that reframe the lyrics from a spiritual perspective. Finally, check-in comments reinforce the temporal and communal dimensions of consumption, whereas negative remarks and other dispersed posts appear only marginally.

REAL RAP

A very common narrative among positive comments — the vast majority — centres on the idea that the music produced by Racionais MC's represents “real rap”, either through comparisons with contemporary rap more broadly or through users situating the music within an understanding of “conscious rap” associated with the late 1990s (Gravato, 2017, 2025). For example: “who came here because of old vs new rap”²; “better than Xamuel”; “old rappers, that was real music... Eminem, Racionais, nowadays Poze do Rodo, Daniel, kkkkk omg”.

REFLECTION OF REALITY

Another recurring narrative frames “Vida Loka Parte II” as a representation of the lived reality of many people. One variation of these comments draws parallels with the present day, suggesting that little has changed socioeconomically since the song's release. For example: “old song but today we still live this reality unfortunately”; “this video turned out really crazy, Racionais' teachings of everyday life in the favela, pure reality, the simplest and humblest ones”; “clip that portrays the reality lived by the largest population on the planet. Congratulations Racionais for portraying our reality in music form”.

² As a measure to ensure privacy, we do not indicate which video the comments were extracted from, nor do we identify the users who authored them.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

Directly connected to the previous category, users draw on the comments section to refer to three main types of situations: similarities between the music/music video and their own lives; similarities between the music/music video and stories of people they know; and accounts of where they were or what contexts they were in when they first heard the song or watched the music video, either for the first time or as a reference to a specific period of their lives. For example: "this song marked 2011 and 2012 a lot, high school time when everyone used to listen on their phones and wear Wall stars, I miss it so much";

ten years ago, I worked in manual labour at the market. I went into a shop to buy a backpack, I was all dirty, I asked the price and the assistant turned her back on me. I worked hard and managed to buy that backpack I dreamed of, and I still keep it as a keepsake! Today I ride a BMW! Never forget, your day will come;

I remember when I was 7 and used to go to my dad's friend's house. The guy was an old-school criminal, that's where I first discovered Racionais. This song was playing at his house, big party, only bank robbers there. I miss my childhood, I was so innocent.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

Closely connected to personal narratives, many users explicitly report feeling emotional when listening to the song or watching the music video. For example: "this clip moves me. I know what poverty is, I know what hardship is"; "I cry every time I listen to this song, because only those who have experienced childhood hardship and overcome it know that this song touches the soul and creates a lump in the throat"; "when he says 'happy to be able to buy blue or red', I genuinely get chills...".

APPRECIATION OF THE MUSIC/VIDEO

Users also draw on the comments section to express positive evaluations of the song or music video in less personal terms, highlighting the quality of Racionais MC's work and using descriptors such as "art", "anthem", and "classic" to categorise "Vida Loka Parte II". For example: "a work of art, this song will never stop being an anthem"; "this video is a masterpiece and should be considered a classic of international music"; "this is real quality music. It gives chills down to the soul".

EXTERNAL TO THE CONTEXTS

We identify that some users — particularly rock music fans — appreciate the song but state that they do not belong to the hip-hop community. These comments are often

followed by responses from other users who, in most cases, either draw connections between the two musical genres, identify themselves as rock fans with similar preferences, or present themselves as rap listeners who welcome them. We also find comments from non-Brazilian users with similar interaction dynamics. For example: "I'm into rock, but my respect for Racionais is huge, absolutely insane!!"; "I liked your comment, friend, rap means a lot to me, Racionais are the best for me"; "I recently started listening to Brazilian rap, I've always wanted to know Brazil. Greetings from Mexico!".

RELIGIOUS REFERENCES

Many comments include references to "God" or other religious allusions. Some religious-themed comments explicitly paraphrase the lyrics of Racionais MC's. For example: "God will always be our refuge and strength"; "tomorrow belongs only to God, life is crazy, real phrase";

rap is my gospel, my praise, that moves and motivates you, gives you strength to overcome; my church is the street, which connects me directly to the divine, and the pastor is the MC who knows how to guide and educate. Thank you, Brazilian rap, another life has been saved.

CHECK-IN COMMENTS

One of the most common types of comments in the videos is the practice of "checking in" over time. Users mark their presence by citing the year or even the exact date in the comments. Some also maintain the tradition of listening to the song during New Year's celebrations. For example: "this song is the New Year's song where I live, every year at midnight it plays, I remember it even though I'm far away"; "2022, this song will never be forgotten"; "it's 2017, but I never get tired of listening to these legends".

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

Since there are no substantially distinct negative narratives to justify separate categories, all such comments are grouped here. These comments are extremely occasional in relation to the song, music video, or group. Some refer to disagreements among users rather than the content itself. Two comments, however, are worth highlighting: one criticises Mano Brown's political statements, and another negatively comments on the physical characteristics of one of the young men at the beginning of the music video: "who is stupid enough to dislike Vida Loka, which is part of the life of millions of people?"; "I really like you, bro, but don't get involved in politics, you're talking nonsense; just because Neymar was on the other side, you got worked up, leave it, bro"; "lol the guys at the beginning of the clip have money but cannot even get a haircut for that afro lol".

OTHER

Many comments are generic or do not present a clear narrative. These include literal quotations of the lyrics, full transcriptions of the song, vague responses to other comments, and isolated utterances without identifiable context (for example, "hi").

Overall, the netnographic analysis suggests that the collective agency observable in the comments section does not generally manifest through explicit programmatic statements of anti-racist activism. Instead, it emerges through diffuse practices of recognition and social memory. When "Vida Loka Parte II" is repeatedly described as "real rap" or as a "reflection of reality", users are not merely evaluating the aesthetic quality of the work; they are publicly validating peripheral experiences of inequality and social mobility that resonate with the video's critique of racial and social injustice. Personal narratives shift reception from taste-based judgement to testimonial expression, transforming the comments section into a living archive of collective identification. Likewise, annual check-ins and listening rituals demonstrate that the video is not only remembered but actively sustained in circulation. In this sense, the resistance articulated in the comments is less an explicitly declared form of activism than a public counter-memory that reaffirms the legitimacy of the work and continuously updates its critical grammar in the present.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The music video mobilises visual and sonic resources to present, in an artistic and documentary form, the reality of Brazilian peripheral urban areas (Santos & Mendonça, 2019). Its narrative density highlights how structural inequalities, shaped by systems of social classification, limit opportunities, isolate individuals, and sustain conditions of vulnerability and abandonment (Quijano, 2000/2019).

It can be argued that the sensibility mobilised by the music video extends beyond visual experience, involving multiple forms of perception linked to contexts, bodies, memories, imaginaries, and community practices. "Vida Loka Parte II" exemplifies how the music video can function as a political instrument of denunciation and awareness-raising, fostering audience engagement and repeated revisiting of the work, while also contributing to the consolidation of its cultural status.

The netnographic analysis of comments indicates that the comments section operates as a device of collective legitimation, in which the work is continuously framed as "real rap" and as a normative reference for evaluating contemporary rap. This process reinforces its status as a circulating classic, sustained also by an experiential dimension in which both the music and the video appear as reflections of recognisable realities and as languages for narrating life trajectories.

As in the images of the music video, the comments mobilise memories, experiences of discrimination, economic hardship, and trajectories of social mobility, often linked to specific scenes from the clip, such as the shop sequence and the evaluative gaze. Expressions of emotion, with references to crying, chills, and identification, function as connectors between personal testimony and broader social reading, turning the

work into a resource for expressing suffering, resilience, and dignity without requiring formal belonging to hip-hop culture.

In parallel, the comments reveal identity crossings that expand the symbolic reach of the music video, including engagement from diverse audiences, including users outside Brazil. This is accompanied by a persistent religious reading, which reframes verses and themes through grammars of faith, protection, and salvation.

The recurrence of revisitation practices, such as check-in comments, evidences a specific temporality of consumption, sustaining the work through repetition and interaction. In this context, the "place" of the music video is constructed less on the platform itself and more within the network of interactions that sustains it.

In this study, we highlight the role of culture and media, which can both reinforce social stereotypes and perpetuate racism in Brazil, as well as constitute spaces of contestation. The analysed music video exemplifies this latter dimension, functioning as a resource for communication, critique, and social awareness-raising through art, whose circulation on YouTube expands its capacity for interaction and reach (Nercolini & Holzbach, 2009).

Finally, it is important to note that the music video is a complex cultural production whose totality cannot be fully accounted for by the dimensions analysed here. The analytical choices privileged the most relevant elements within the study's scope; however, a broader reading — particularly from an intersectional perspective — could further explore issues such as representations of women, family dynamics, and narrative temporalities, such as flashbacks, thereby expanding the interpretative possibilities of the work.

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