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**MUSIC DECOLONIALIZES *LUSOFONIA*?
ENTREPRENEURIAL EFFORTS TOWARDS INTERCULTURALISM**

Bart Paul VANSPAUWEN*

*Institute of Ethnomusicology, Nova University, Lisbon, Portugal

***Abstract:** Recent research in the fields of Ethnomusicology, Anthropology and Sociology frame the concept of lusofonia more as a return movement of the expressive cultures and memories of Portugal’s former colonial territories than as a linguistic field of the spoken sphere. In addition, in Portugal, institutional racism has legitimated both sociological and cultural racism perspectives. This friction has implied, among musicians, addressing lusofonia as a space of struggle, decolonialism and intervention. If the documentary Lusofonia, a (r)evolução continues to be influential, so is the claim that the lack remains, of a sustained institutional interest in lusofonia and its musical fusions. Drawing upon the results of 6 years of field research in Lisbon, I want to shed more light on how efforts of cultural entrepreneurs have addressed issues of politics of memory to negotiate national narratives and cultural policies. By mapping social struggles over the definition of collective memory, Ethnomusicology may reveal how political categories blur and dichotomize postcolonial cultural expression. Initiatives such as Lisboa que Amanhece, Conexão Lusófona, Lisboa Mistura and Musidanças, mentioned in this paper, project intercultural understandings of lusofonia processes as fundamental for Portugal’s contemporary, national identity.*

***Keywords:** music, lusofonia, expressive culture, propaganda, heritage*

1. INTRODUCTION

Roughly since the turn of the millennium, cultural entrepreneurs engaged in disseminating the musical heritage of their countries have emerged in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. The entry of lusophone musics to the *world music* market during the 1990s extended the scope of performances to music festivals and international concerts, enabling interaction and complicity between lusophone in a transnational framework. In this context, the creation of political institutions such as the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (1996) and broadcasts to lusophone Africa with RDP África (1996), international cultural events such as the Lisbon World Exposition (1998), the online dissemination of critical content such as the documentary *Lusofonia, a (R)evolução* (2006), as well as national and municipal cultural policies have come to strengthen an context of cultural collaboration within the Portuguese-speaking world in which the idea of a musical *lusofonia* is being utilized and developed.

In academia, recent research in the fields of Ethnomusicology, Anthropology and Sociology frame this concept of *lusofonia* more as a return movement of the expressive cultures and memories of Portugal’s former colonial territories than as a linguistic field of the spoken sphere. In parallel, issues of multiculturalism, minority rights, and cultural heritage have become increasingly important for the development and implementation of international, regional and local cultural policies. As major sites of immigration and cultural diversity, cities have become privileged arenas for the expression of citizenship and democracy, while not being immune to sentiments of exclusion, xenophobia and racism (Bäckström & Castro-Pereira, 2012). An analysis of transnational cultural flows in the lusophone world may offer new perspectives on how musical performance works to articulate identities that depart from received narratives of Portuguese national culture. Investigating into the strategies that musicians with limited outreach develop in order to engage with local cultural policies may allow for new, decolonial perspectives.

Intercultural competence, understood as “constructive interaction among different peoples emerging from distinct cultures”, is a core issue in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2010:2), cf. Côte-Real, 2010 and 2013). In particular, Holton and Klimt suggest that “one of the key arenas in which to explore the play between power and performance is at the level of the co-ethnic community” (2009:19), since this is where interculturalism plays out. In fact, Intercultural relationships are built upon the dynamic flow between cultures and alterity (Marques *et al.* 2012:9). As such, they allow for investigating how socially induced notions of political correctness, such as racial tolerance and multiculturalism, are actually used as a tool to accommodate notions of difference which are in conflict with a given identity (Marques *et al.* 2012:9). What is being debated is

the essential governability of multicultural communities living together in a given nation-state - who has the authority to create norms and social hierarchies within society or to exclude anyone and on what basis (Bäckström & Castro-Pereira, 2012:83)

No doubt, the biggest challenge of contemporary societies is the evolution from multicultural to intercultural understanding, by mutually recognizing and valorizing difference in postcolonial, relational context (Bäckström & Castro-Pereira, 2012:86-87).

2. THE CONCEPT OF *LUSOFONIA*

Various studies point out that Portuguese society is not yet permeable to “non-western” influences as it did not develop critical readings of these expressions or strategies that promote their integration in a conscious and positive way (Dias, 2006:92, cf. Sieber, 2002; Fradique, 2002; Vanspauwen, 2013). In fact, in Portugal, institutional racism has legitimated both sociological and cultural racism perspectives (Mamadou, 2014). This friction has implied, among musicians, addressing *lusofonia* as a space of struggle, decolonialism and intervention. Thus, it is imperative to introduce a debate in Portugal on the development of postcolonial identities and the facilitator role that subaltern artistic expression can have in interacting with dominant society and culture (cf. Maciel, 2010; Macedo, 2013; Martins 2015). In other words, it is necessary to understand “how the music of Portuguese colonies affected the music of Portugal and its immigrant groups [in] a reciprocal process of musical exchange” (Pegg, 2002: 177).

This same claim was made through the documentary *Lusofonia, a (r)evolução*, made by the Portuguese branch of the Red Bull Music Academy in 2006. This documentary presented a narrative that suggested that lusophone sounds evolved but still belong together, and argued that that both historical and contemporary musical confluences in and between Portugal, Brazil and PALOP should be revalorized. While prescribing *lusofonia* as an instrument of unification of various musical forms, whether sung in Portuguese or creole, *Lusofonia, a (r)evolução* also aimed at erasing social exclusion and artistic marginalization (ibid). Finally, it promoted the increasing mixture of lusophone musics by institutional and mercantile bodies in Portugal, to project to a wider, international, audience.

Drawing upon the results of 6 years of field research in Lisbon, I want to shed more light on how efforts of cultural entrepreneurs have addressed issues of politics of memory to negotiate national narratives and cultural policies. If the documentary *Lusofonia, a (r)evolução* continues to be influential, so is the claim that the lack remains, of a sustained institutional interest in *lusofonia* and its musical fusions. Musidanças, created in 2001, was the first music festival to apply the notion of *lusofonia*, positioning itself “as a link between lusophone cultures.” Over its 15 years of existence, the festival has sought

to encourage the creation of lusophone art, to develop lusophone awareness and to provide qualitative attractions that can keep the origins of the foreign-lusophone public residing in Portugal alive.¹

As founder-director Firmino Pascoal states:

For me this matter [of] lusofonia has always been clear: showing Portuguese, foreigners and even our own people of other lusophone countries that live here the culture of one another (interview).

Musidanças’ main music genres are traditional music, world fusion, reggae and hip hop. It has also occasionally featured a *fado* performance.

The festival Lisboa Mistura, organized since 2006 by the association Sons da Lusofonia, does not explicitly evoke the concept of *lusofonia*, even though it features many local musicians with origins in lusophone countries. Carlos Martins, the festival’s director and founder, affirms that the festival fosters an

enrichment [project] of the common heritage of the Portuguese-speaking peoples, [by] promoting

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/festivalmusidancas>

diversity [within] the various communities residing in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (interview).

According to Martins, *lusofonia* forms the basis for interculturality in Lisbon (interview). “Without lusofonia, we would not have any condition whatsoever to deal with intercultural issues” (interview).

The educational project *Lisboa Que Amanhece* was organized in 2011 by Restart-Instituto de Criatividade, Artes e Novas Tecnologias, as part of a class on event-production and marketing. Its name refers to the title of a song by Sérgio Godinho, interpreted with Caetano Veloso,

that symbolically displays Lisbon as the capital of a multicultural movement where miscegenation is demonstrative of this exchange of languages and cultures.²

Director Alex Cortez Pinto points out that his students had suggested to

organize an event that would demonstrate that one same public can be interested in different music genres, precisely because of this *lusofonia* issue: the Portuguese language as an element of connection (interview).

Lisboa Que Amanhece featured hip hop, jazz, pop-rock, *música popular portuguesa* as well as one *fado* performance. Cortez Pinto:

[We tried] to show precisely that, not Portugal influenced cultures of other countries, but instead this mixture, this miscegenation could be a factor of greater unification.

He adds,

Today we witness *fado* as intangible cultural heritage of humanity, but we should realize that our great heritage in fact is *lusofonia*, and that this heritage should be protected, encouraged and developed (interview).

Finally, the *Festival Conexão Lusófona* was first organized in 2012 by the association Conexão Lusófona, Co-founder-director Laura Filipa Vidal argues that

Portuguese colonialism happened, and we must recognize that a mixture has taken place. [However], this new Lisbon that is not being properly communicated to its tourist audience. [the city] does not assume itself in its policy and its communication strategies (interview).

In her view, Lisbon has

a very interesting potential here that is not being explored: [tourists] can indeed have a lusophone experience, but will only get [access] to it if they know locals that are willing to take them to these places, and even so there should be more such places than there are today (interview).

Festival Conexão Lusófona has mainly presented world fusion, hip hop and traditional music.

For these cultural entrepreneurs, the music mixing idea as well as the valorization of non-Portuguese lusophone musics lie at the basis of their work. Simultaneously, the claim of a sustained institutional interest in musical *lusofonia* grows stronger, as a new generation of lusophone citizens wants to affirm itself against expression of Portuguese-ness (*portugalidade*) as unilateral, outward cultural traffic, by focusing on the historically legitimate intercultural niches in music in music and other expressive domains that have survived and are developing in the present day. The intervenients that I interviewed contend that only institutional and commercial support for this idea can achieve a change of mentalities from a political, social and cultural point of view. Despite the signaled lack of intercultural places to perform, a number of clubs, bars and associations have already dedicated themselves to promoting musical versions of *lusofonia*. Here as well as on the occasion of individual concerts and phonograms, Portuguese musicians and musicians from other Portuguese-speaking countries (both residents and international artists on tour) have increasingly performed together, occasionally mixing their musics through discographic or live collaborations.

As my ethnography suggest, new cultural productions tend to reflect old imperial connections through official discourses, which are linked to historical power structures. It is at least curious to see how the discourse of deep historical and cultural ties between lusophone countries, recurrent in the speeches of government officials and often revealing lusotropicalist traits, has moved beyond the limits of the intellectual elite, with increasing importance for cultural movements. I argue that these intercultural encounters undo monocultural musical configurations associated to nationalism, on the one hand, while they also promote cultural fusions and collaborations based on diasporic and linguistic associations. In this respect, Lisbon seems to have started to promote itself as city than contains a unique set of lusophone musics to include Brazil and Africa, including *fado*. This

² <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lisboa-Que-Amanhece/212879422081334?id=212879422081334&sk=info>

“diasporic imagination” (Dunn 2002, quoted in La Barre 2010) both reflects and reinvents cultural manifestations on the local, national and transnational level. Thus, musical *lusofonia* eventually becomes a tool for promoting Portugal as an open, inclusive, and intercultural city that builds on representations of the ‘other’ (La Barre 2011:154-157).

In this sense, music may represent a more open, fluid way to think the concept of *lusofonia*. To my understanding, the cultural entrepreneurs above advocate a “mode of managing cultural and political multiplicities,” thus contradicting the process of cosmopolitanism as a mere “nationally defined and nationally determined construction” (paraphrasing La Barre 2011:150), and transcending the underlying contradictions of the *lusofonia* concept. As such, they expand postcolonial viewpoints to a truly global understanding of “cultural cosmopolitanism”, as understood by Vertovec and Cohen (2002), Sanches *et al.* (2004) and Stokes (2007).

3. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I argue that an analysis of transnational cultural flows in the lusophone world may offer new perspectives on how musical performance works to articulate identities that depart from received narratives of Portuguese national culture. As Brandtstädter *et al.* point out, “cracks in existing hegemonies and alternative possibilities emerge through social engagement as a member of [a] community of meaning, praxis and emotional attachment” (2011: np). Initiatives such as Musidanças, Lisboa Mistura, Lisboa que Amanhece and Festival Conexão Lusófona frame intercultural understandings of *lusofonia* processes as fundamental for Portugal’s contemporary, national identity. Investigating into the strategies that these cultural entrepreneurs develop in order to engage with local cultural policies may allow for new, decolonial perspectives. By mapping social struggles over the definition of collective memory, Ethnomusicology may reveal how political categories both obscure and enable postcolonial participatory citizenship.

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