

LOCAL MUSICKING – THEME AND VARIATIONS

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AN INTRODUCTION FOR THE LOCAL
MUSICKING DOSSIER

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*“O semba no morro é fogueira /
o semba que traz liberdade/
o semba de nossa bandeira”*

[Semba on the hills is a fire/ Semba
which brings freedom/
That semba from our flag]

*“Poema do Semba”, from Paulo Flores
and Carlos Burity, 1996*

The song in epigraph is presented in an article in this dossier. In these three verses, the Angolan music takes us from the hills to the nation or, in the article's words, between local, national and global. Here we propose reflections around the concept of local musicking, stimulating the reader/listener to follow those paths where music activities produce localities and are affected by them.

The notion of local musicking is being experimented in a thematic project, in which the three organizers

for this dossier participate. Since 2016, we have been focusing our researches towards this expression which links the concept of *musicking* - from Christopher Small - with the notion of locality, thought from the considerations of authors like Arjun Appadurai and Ruth Finnegan. *Musicking*, in the terms of Small (1998), refers to any form of engagement with music, taken not only in its formal aspects (the musical piece), but also as performance, fruition, acquisition, musical transmission etc.

To integrate this dossier, there were contributions from authors working with the *local musicking* concept and its interfaces, considering specific ethnographic examples where this notion is brought to light, and adding conceptual discussions in this particular field. Among these contributions, there are researchers from the Brazilian project (“Local Musicking - new paths for ethnomusicology” - FAPESP, 2016/05318-7) and other ones, from diverse perspectives, which accepted the challenge to articulate ethnographic works with our proposition in focus.

In the opening article “Local musicking and the musical production of locality”, Suzel Reily, the director for the thematic project, introduces the theory and the methodological approach that she and other researchers elaborated to think about the relation between musicking and locality, applying it to some ethnographic cases. Here we understand the concept of *local musicking* as it links tangible and intangible worlds, and perceive the musical practices as they occupy, transform and subvert physical spaces: the streets of Campanha-MG, the periphery of Recife-PE and the cities marked by apartheid in South Africa.

On the other hand, the *musicking* is also defined by physical spaces, from the intimate acoustics in the little bar where *bossa nova* was created, to the amplitude of streets that people want to illuminate, with that powerful sound of “*alfaia*” drums in *maracatu* groups. Musicking is like a technology to transform spaces, as Appadurai (1996) says, making the place a space *de facto*, or, with S. Reily interpretation of De Certeau concept (1998), a “practiced place”.

Locality is the result of a double displacement, in this text and in the proposition we elaborated. First, as S. Reily reinterprets from Michel de Certeau - from that difference between space and place - it is not the physical environment *a priori*, but always the result emerging from an interaction. It is the effect of an heterogeneous body of social relations in constant interaction and, as a matter of fact, of change.

We start with the assumption that *musicking*, as a “collective technology of interaction” (Appadurai 1996), is a nodal point from which the “structure of feelings” incarnated with locality is configured. Additionally, considering



this process as multidirectional from the core, the dynamics established in a locality affect this *musicking*. When the musicking is qualified as local, as we said, it is affirmed that music activities build locality and are built by localities.

On the other hand, as corollary, there is a tendency towards thinking how the notion of locality evokes feelings of community and belonging. These meanings are reconfigured not only through musical practices and performances, but also from what is mobilized by these expressions in terms of political ties in the formation of groups. Their proposals not only show a state of affairs but, as S. Reily says in her article, they show a “collective construction of a place aimed for living”.

With their inherent particularities, the articles of both Meno Del Picchia and Raquel Martins operate inside and from this field of research questions. In “Fluxos, quebrada and funk musicking - feeling within the music”, a text on the funk “fluxos” in a neighborhood in the outskirts of São Paulo, Del Picchia starts with the notion of *musicking* meaning all activities engaging with music (and not only *tout court* music practices) to think about the interaction between heavy sound systems and the bodies, the people. These bodies are both those who “command” the sound systems and the people who dance to the music and create a particular sound transfer.

In the article “Funk physical and affective spaces: the local musicking of São Paulo lesbian parties”, Raquel Martins describes events inside the lesbian scene in São Paulo, like “Sarrada do Brejo” and “Fancha”. She proposes that the *musicking* emerging in this confluence of interactions participates in the (con)formation of a locality, and its meanings are intertwined with body politics giving value to the lesbian body, and also to the fat and the black bodies.

Both works here converge in a specific sound culture: *funk* culture in Brazil. Their *musicking*, distinct in some aspects, engage peripheral or marginalized bodies as places of acclamation for the other imagined community (Anderson, 1983). This other community, as a locality, is also an “inherently fragile social conquer”, as pointed out by Appadurai. Facing this, there is the need that the locality is made and remade each time, affirming its daily practice of building belonging and worlds through a *musicking*.

In dialogue here with these texts, we have the review “Amaculo Manihamba: Women’s Walking Songs in a Borderland Region in Southern Africa” by Érica Giesbrecht, for the book from Angela Impey, *Song Walking: Women, Music, and Environmental Justice in an African Borderland*. Impey notes that resilience and memory practices by a population

under removal and deprivation of sources, between Mozambique, South Africa and Essuatini region (former Swaziland), are active inside local women's *Isitweletwele* songs. These are performed with a little musical bow, during their walks through the areas which are still permitted. Elderly women here, from different ethnic backgrounds, reverberate their narratives of subalternity under political dynamics around this frontier. Therefore, as seen in the texts of P. M. Del Picchia and in R. Martins, displacements, corporeality and narratives of subalternity are intercrossed with a common point: uniting the politics and the poetics of *musicking* in the making of locality.

Another review in this dossier presents *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Local Musicking*, coedited by Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher, which won the 2019 Ellen Koskoff Edited Volume Prize, from the Society for Ethnomusicology. The book, reviewed here by Gibran Teixeira Braga, is a result of the two research projects: "Local Musicking in Cross-Cultural Perspective" (2014-15 U.K.) and the thematic project we take part, in Brazil (with researchers from UNICAMP Arts Institute, from Anthropology and Music departments at USP and also from IEB-USP Brazilian Studies). The volume brings multiple articles by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists from diverse nationalities, and includes recent researches in Brazil. The themes include the notions of traditional and authenticity in local musicking; the relation between participation and presentation seen by Thomas Turino; researches with German choirs; with young Greenlander musicians; *jongo* dance in Campinas; participatory audience in a Chicago Community radio station; the relations between global and local in *musicking* on YouTube, and in migration movements; imbrications between musical community practices and citizenship, in the *coloured* community in South Africa and in Portuguese choirs; Music and community connections among Nigerian Pentecostals in Greece; or an approach to John Blacking's works among the Venda people.

Some of that book's themes are present here. In a different ethnographic context, the relations between local and global are approached by Andre Castro Soares in "Sembapatrimonioimaterial.com: local performances, imagined national narratives, dialogue from the field". He talks about *semba*, its routes for the recognition as immaterial patrimony by UNESCO and by Angolan government, and also about the role of a collaborative website publicizing related musicians. Soares shows how music practices transit and redefine spaces given traditionally as local, national and global.

This way, *sembapatrimonioimaterial.com* production is the methodological practice for the researcher to observe dissensus (Rancière and Corcoran 2010) inside patrimonial visions and versions, from the present to the past (Macdonald 2013). *Semba* is "seen as local, but felt as a

national expression” by its insiders. Even if it is developed as a rhythm from Luanda, it tends to correspond to a “feeling linked to the Angolan nation and even the production of Angolanity”. The author emphasizes frictions and complementary points between “imagined community”, from Benedict Anderson (1983) proposition, and “practice communities” in semba, with their performances in constant transformation.

If that imagined notion links semba to the past with the sense of an Angolan nation-state, the idea of practice community developed by Wenger and Trayner (2015) explains the union of people around activities in common, many times towards common objective and shared identities and references. We see possible approaches between the different notions of “community” and that of “locality”, which is central to our reflections on local musicking.

Another author here, aware of these dynamics, is Juan Pablo Estupiñan Bejarano with the article “Singing to the virgin. Sound negotiations in the celebration of the *balsadas* in Guapi (Colombian Pacific coast)”. He shows how the *balsadas* engage and transform the community as a whole, involving tourists and residents (musicians, merchants, religious devotees and other participants). His ethnographic tour de force brings dense description of the boat procession, where negotiations to receive the holy Virgin happen also in musical stances, with different phases and differentiated ethos emphasized. It is the *musicking* that drives behaviors and relations between participants themselves, and with the community, during *balsadas*

This text dialogues with the article “The musicking of atajo de negritos from Ballumbrosio family: an ethnography of performance”, by Ellis Regina Sanchez on the *atajos de negritos*, a Peruvian patrimony recognized, with Afro-Peruvian and European elements. She examines the relations between *musicking* groups, dynamics of rehearsal, questions brought with Peruvian national patrimonialization, and standardized conducts around Ballumbrosio family. At the same time, the text shows the relations between *musicking* and locality, also in change, with tourism; the territory division of practice spaces; and the ritual transmutations in the narrative: from the conversion of *negritos* (moors) into Christians up to the consumption of ritual artifacts in the fire.

Now extrapolating the limits of a single locality, the article by Cristina de Branco and Mariana Santos Teófilo, “Musicking *Aymara* and *Quechua* immigrants translocalities in São Paulo”, approaches flute and dance groups from Bolivian highlands in São Paulo (Brazil), around Brás neighborhood. The authors show the activities in Kollasuyo Maya Cultural Center, where performing groups, with music and dance, bring narratives permeated

with an organologic cosmogony of flutes, and the agriculture cycles from their place of origin. Through their performances, those groups negotiate highland identities (local) and Bolivian identity (plurinational), with Brazilian government instances and with other migrant groups. Also, exploring the transnational network notion (Glick-Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992), the authors point to relations between São Paulo groups and similar ones from other South-American capital cities, identifying transcontinental music dialogues.

The last three articles we introduce here have thoughts in common about ethnomusicological research and audiovisual work. In our thematic project we have been discussing “technologies of interactivity” enacted in the production of local musicking. When starting the project in 2016, we could not imagine that we would live the world crisis with COVID-19 pandemic, from 2020 on, and a unique situation of relations, mediated with technological apparatus. It is a new dimension for the reflection about production and circulation of images in the studied contexts, with social distance generalized.

Before the pandemics, we discussed the use of audiovisual in ethnography, either to approach the flow of participative musical performances (Vilella, in print), the atmospheres and experiences of musical fruition (Leaha, 2019 and 2020), the collaborations with subjects on the production of knowledge (Chalcraft and Hikiji, 2020), or the daily aspects of senses (smell, taste, tact) which integrate into the musicking. These are hard to be described in academic writing but approachable with images, sound and movement, or through poetic writing.

The article of Luiza Fernandes Coelho, “Portraying “musicking” and “participatory characteristics” of bumba-meu-boi in film”, brings an approach similar to that of Alice Vilella and Hidalgo Romero (2018) to discuss how the bumba-meu-boi, an essentially participative form of musicking (Turino 2008), is translated into audiovisual language in three productions: *Guriatã* (Renata Amaral, 2018), *Taquaras, Tambores e Violas* (Hidalgo Romero, 2018) and *Night Shine* (Priscilla Ermel, 2004). The three are compared in their characteristics, with their ways to introduce the characters, research times and recording times, narrative arcs, image aesthetics, editing resources, their use of interviews and their approaches of participation.

In “Sensitive connections: following the ethnobiographic trail of a Chaocan musician”, Maria Eugênia Domingues looks at her own experience as director of *Pascual Toro, flautero*, a film about a master of the Arete tradition, celebrated in rites from south-west Bolivia, northern Argentina and western Paraguay. The protagonist Pascual Toro is a Guarani man who lives in Paraguay, in Santa Teresita, Boquerón, and his narrative in the film



describes the long way to become a *flautero*, in the main ritual from the Guarani people in northern Paraguayan Chaco. For the author, the ethnobiography is a way to understand connections gathered by the protagonist and his people in some domains, which usually appear separated in Western music making. From the methodological point of view, the author reinforces, with an inspiration from Prelorán, the participative character of his camera, the shared production of knowledges between anthropologist and researched subjects, and an attention with the ethnobiography. These are ways to understand the life and the philosophy of real people, abandoning notions like ‘communities’ or ‘societies’. He also highlights the importance of sound in his movies, the creation of sound landscapes, composed of voices, human activities, animals and other sounding elements. Here M. E. Domingues also discusses artistic individuality and collectivity, the role of rhythms and reiterations in Guarani phrases, and the articulation between multiple expressive forms present in the Arete (dance, music, drama) with an insider point of view. And showing her interlocutor *musicking* situated and crossing social dimensions touched by the whole community.

Finally, in “Listening to the headphones, hearing the city: towards an audiovisual representation of the local musicking”, a text written with multiple hands, we approach ethnographic possibilities to understand a diverse urban musicking, *with the use of audiovisual resources, even in social distance contexts*. The complex relation between “want to hear” and “need to hear” is explored. Eight authors here show their audiovisual strategies to represent characteristics and possibilities of *musicking* for riders, Brazilian workers delivering for food Apps. They live in Dublin and have music as part of their daily working routine. This *musicking* is one of a plural listening: to sounds which are desired, necessary, inevitable, or sometimes unwanted. Parallel to the discussion of the differences between hearing and listening, authors are motivated to think how they can build a sensitive representation for this *musicking*, which permeates working relations, locality and affections. These participants of the film disclose, along spatial and sounding routes on the city, the relation between the pleasure of listening their own sound choices on the headphone while working (music genders, Brazilian or not, news and instruction podcasts) and the danger of having traffic sounds covered. They have to be aware so they do not have accidents.

From the streets of Angola, sung in semba lyrics, to Dublin confronted on the sounds of food delivery bike riders during pandemics, this dossier proposes *musicking* as a potency that transforms *places* - seen by De Certeau (1998) as static entities which join elements together - into *spaces*, or “practiced places”, produced by actions, movements and practices. In these times of social distance, when public singing is a risk activity and the sole right to breathe is limited (Mbembe, 2020), the search for practices

which produce “structures of feelings” (Appadurai, 1996) and establish fields of “habitation, production and moral safety for the population” will demand “continuous collective effort”, as Suzel Reily pointed out in the beginning of this dossier. We invite everyone to read it.

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