Gringo, nomad and black – on the politics of African musicking in São Paulo

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ABSTRACT

Accompanying African musicians who have arrived in Brazil in recent years, we observe how their *musicking* in São Paulo creates a world of imagination and political potential, a space for solidarity, inhabited by African and Afro-diasporic entities from past and present history, from anti-colonial, anti-slavery or Afropolitan struggles and from artistic manifestations (Mbembe, 2017). How do these musicians deal with the racial and cultural politics in Brazil? How do racism and Afro-Brazilian movements challenge them? What transcultural capitals (Glick-Schiller and Meinhof, 2011) or forms of "social action" (Blacking, 1995) do they mobilize to navigate the Brazilian art scene? How do they deal with cultural institutions and social movements? Being African in Brazil – whether on stage, in the recording studio, in artivist or solidarity events – is always an act of resistance. Whether "gringos" or "nomads," these artists constitute a "musical community" (Shelemay, 2011) with whom we dialogue in a shared and filmic ethnographic making.

KEYWORDS

Music, African migration, artivism, creative diaspora

INTRODUCTIONS

"Tell me something, Lenna: how did you end up in this music business here in Sampa [São Paulo]? You're really famous. The diva of African music..." The Congolese musician Yannick Delass strikes up a conversation with the Mozambican Lenna Bahule in a restaurant in Vila Madalena, a bohemian district of São Paulo's west zone, full of bars, restaurants and cultural spaces. They did not yet know each other personally, and had just been introduced to each other by us, two anthropologists conducting research and making films on the African creative diaspora in Brazil. Close to the school of music where we recorded the two musicians meeting, we stopped to have a snack in a new Congolese restaurant and met Pitchou Luambo, another Congolese who we knew from the activist movement supporting refugees in São Paulo. Also a chef, Pitchou served a vegan dish from the Democratic Republic of Congo and sat down at the table with the musicians.

We anthropologist-filmmakers continued filming while Ricardo Dionisio recorded the audio of this improvised conversation: "I'm an international musician," Yannick continued, presenting himself to Lenna but also to the cameras, "So far, in Minas, Bahia..." He concluded in a mournful tone: "It's only in São Paulo that I'm [seen as] a refugee musician! It seems it's something in the air here in São Paulo: the black man comes to Brazil and in São Paulo he's a refugee. Just because I'm black, they call me a refugee."

The course of the conversation might have been different, perhaps, had we not met Pitchou as he was running the kitchen. The chef is also coordinator of the *Homeless Refugees and Immigrants Group* (GRIST)[1] and knew his countryman Yannick from events he had organised with African artists in support of the movement. Having introduced the topic, the improvised conversation would continue to take this tack. For Lenna, more than the question of the refugee – an issue she claimed had emerged more strongly since 2014 – it was a more general interest in African culture that marked her arrival in the city: "São Paulo was going through a moment of demand, a search for African culture... Because African topics began to be spoken about quite a lot in the public environment, in public schools."

Leaving the restaurant, we walked about 300 metres along Rua Paulistânia until reaching the Espaço Musical, a school where various musicians linked to the new popular music scene in São Paulo work,[2] and which had granted us space to record the encounter between Lenna and Yannick. For around two hours we observed and recorded the result of our provocation with our cameras and microphones: an exchange of musical ideas – and more – between two artists from the African diaspora, coming from different countries with their own trajectories and experiences after their arrival in Brazil and São Paulo.

1 | TN: In Portuguese, *Grupo de Refugiados e Imigrantes Sem Teto*.

2 | New Brazilian popular music, independent music or alternative music are denominations used by the artists and analysts from this scene, characterized by the distance from the mainstream media, the recourse to public funding and private sponsorship. For more on this scene, see Faraco, 2020.

We begin this article with this dialogue taken from *Afro-Sampas*, the third film to result from the project "Being/Becoming African in Brazil: music making and African cultural heritage in São Paulo"[3] to emphasise the themes and issues that have emerged for what we call the African *creative diaspora* in São Paulo. Since 2016 we have been working with these musicians and artists coming recently to Brazil from different countries of the African continent. We observe their action in the city's cultural spaces, their relations with social movements, and their everyday lives in this diverse, unequal and complicated megalopolis.

Our observation is not distanced. This research invests in shared audiovisual filmmaking as both method and result: we experiment with film as ethnography in our capacity as anthropologists and filmmakers, sometimes as coauthors, sometimes as coartists.[4] At this moment of textualization, the question of how to inscribe a form of knowledge that takes place through listening, music making, the audiovisual and creative exchange reveals intermediality as a pathway forward.

Steven Feld addresses this question in his ethnographic research with musicians from the jazz scene in Ghana's capital Accra, based on collaborative musical production, the discussion of shared references, recording CDs and making films. For Feld, in this context textualization implies reflecting on voice, polyphony and dialogism. In the progression from sound to image, and later to text, Feld (2020: 4) emphasizes a "sequence of representational movements" in which subjectivity and intersubjectivity constantly shift. To produce music with his interlocutors, the anthropologist must listen to recordings with them, speak about these recordings and make music together. The production of films also incorporated into this movement and collaboration thus becomes intermediality. Finally, at the moment of writing itself, the comments from his interlocutors concerning the text he produces are also incorporated, sometimes as lengthy footnotes. It is this "conjunction between sonic, visual, sonic-visual and textual media" that, Feld argues, constitutes "intervocality, intermediality and intersubjectivity" (Feld, ibid: 5).

In the research presented here, *intersubjectivity* is located in the moment of co-creating ethnographic films, *intervocality* is both conversation and listening, and *intermediality* is expressed in this text when the latter is constructed through the various audiovisual records of moments of musical and discursive creation, some provoked by the anthropologists, others by the people we observe.

The conversation between Lenna Bahule, Yannick Delass and Pitchou Luambo would continue to touch on subjects that connected them, as artists or activists, and as Africans in São Paulo. Between the displeasure over an attributed identity – the "black man/woman" who is called a refugee in Brazil – and their positive diagnosis of the growing interest in African culture (which Lenna attributes to leftwing PT governments that stimulated an openness to cultural diversity),[5] their conversation reveals the nuances of identity, belonging and experiences that the receiving country (and city) offers to

3 | In Portuguese, *Ser/Tornar-se africano no Brasil –Fazer musical e patrimônio cultural africano em São Paulo*. A research project coordinated by the authors of this article as part of the thematic project "O musicar local: Novas trilhas para a etnomusicologia" (FAPESP Process 2016/05318-7) to which we are affiliated as main researcher and associate researcher. Rose Satiko G. Hikiji is a CNPq productivity award holder.

4 | The references here are diverse: the shared anthropology of Jean Rouch (Hikiji, 2013), discussions from the field of ethnographic film (Crawford and Turton, 1995), and the experiments with art and anthropology (Schneider and Wright, 2010). We discuss some of these collaborative aspects in the making of ethnographic film in Chalcraft and Hikiji, 2020.

5 | Lenna arrived in Brazil in 2012 during the Dilma Rousseff government (2011-2016), the third administration of the Workers' Party (PT) in the presidency of the country, following 8 years of government by Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011). In the city of São Paulo, the PT also governed between 2013 and 2017 through Fernando Haddad's administration. Lenna mentions the interest in African topics in public spaces, an interest itself related to the law passed in 2003 (10.639/03) in the first year of the Lula government (amended by Law 11.645/08), which made teaching Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture obligatory in all Brazil's primary and secondary schools, public and private. For an analysis of the role of the Lula government in racial policies in Brazil, see Lima (2010).

these Africans in movement. In their individual trajectories each constructs forms of practice (artistic, political, quotidian) and representation that we will follow in the following pages. Whether "gringos" or "nomads,"[6] these diaspora artists are authors of a history that is starting to be written and that is already making a lot of noise in the musical worlds of São Paulo and beyond.

In this article we set out to understand how our interlocutors cope with Brazil's racial and cultural politics. For example, what transcultural capital (Glick-Schiller and Meinhof, 2011) do they mobilize to navigate in the São Paulo artistic scene? What is the relationship between identity and resistance in their experience as recent arrivals in the country? How do their practices construct and reinforce local and translocal struggles? What is the artistic power of resistance contained in these different colonial histories?

These reflections are constructed in the context of the thematic project "Local musicking: new pathways for ethnomusicology," in which a team of more than 40 researchers at different moments in their careers, including anthropologists, musicians and ethnomusicologists, have been thinking about how *musicking* constructs localities and how it is constructed by them. In the project we mobilize the concept of *musicking* (or *musicar* in our translation into Portuguese), a term coined by Christopher Small to designate diverse forms of engaging with music, from musical performance itself to the acts of listening to or talking about music, consuming music, or participating in any musical production. In qualifying *musicking* as local, we are not necessarily referring to physical or geographical spaces but, as Appadurai (1996) suggests, thinking of space as a "structure of feelings."[7] As Suzel Reily (2021: 11) also observes, the construction of locality, in this perspective, "constitutes a political project."[8]

Localities are affected and affect the music making of our protagonists. If, as Trajano Filho (2012: 7) notes, "our history, our world of the here and now and the future that we project for ourselves and for others are irremediably associated with the places that we remember and created," then spaces emerge from actions and practices: they are "practiced spaces" from the viewpoint of De Certeau (1998: 2001), and also "contexts of experiences" (Reily, 2021: 10). In the case of the African creative diaspora, we need to reflect on translocality, since their musicking is constituted through references to prior experiences in Africa, to the professional and geographical trajectories of each musician, and to the spaces (and places, people, institutions, networks and publics) that they find and construct in the host city.

"IN THE LAND OF BLACK PEOPLE, YOU DON'T NEED TO BE BLACK": TRANSLOCALITY AND AFROPOLITANISM

Lenna Bahule, "very famous here" in Yannick's words, occupied a prominent place in São Paulo's independent music scene when we began our research in 2016. Her name was recalled in any conversation in which an interest in researching African

6 | O tema das relações ambientais dos povos indígenas com o semiárido tem rendido investigações bem contemporâneas (Santos, Silva e Oliveira, 2018).

7 | For more on the idea of *local musicking*, see Hikiji, Reily and Toni (2016).

8 | In her article discussing "local musicking" and the production of localities, Suzel Reily (2021: 12) exemplifies this idea with the case of South Africa: "since the end of Apartheid, many Venda have turned to musical practices in the complicated process of restoring *a structure of feelings* capable of providing them with a community spirit that leads to the reduction in violence and better living conditions" (our emphasis).

musicians in Brazil was mentioned. She arrived in the city in 2012 and forged partnerships with musicians like João Taubkin, and with the Clarianas, a group that defines itself as "African-northeastern-indigenous-peripheral in origin," she researched body percussion with the Barbatuques, acted as musical director for Gumboot Dance Brasil, a group that disseminates South African dance, formed the Bahule Quartet and developed the Nômades project, an experimental vocal group, with which she recorded an award-winning CD[9] and performed shows in Brazil and Mozambique.

Between 2016 and 2018 we made the film *Woya Hayi Mawe – where are you going?* with Lenna, in which we accompanied her own musical and background explorations between São Paulo and Maputo. Lenna also stars in *Afro-Sampas*, a film released in 2020, mentioned earlier.[10]

Her musical training in Maputo was classical: she studied piano for eight years at the National School of Music. Lenna first came into contact with Brazilian music by listening to MPB records, which her father, a sound engineer and music collector, kept at home. In Mozambique she collaborated with musicians playing various genres – rap, jazz, soul – and on tours was a backing vocalist for the musician Stewart Sukuma. She toured Europe and even performed in Brazil before she applied to study at the Berklee College of Music in the United States but, lacking the funds for her everyday living expenses, she decided to come to Brazil instead. She came in search of music she liked, such as the compositions of Hermeto Pascoal and Naná Vasconcelos. In contrast, she says that she did not have any special relationship with Mozambican music when she left her country.

In this sense, Lenna's experience can be conceived in terms of what Hannerz (2006: 13) calls cultural cosmopolitanism, the ability to enter other cultures and be open to divergent cultural experiences.[11] Her ability to navigate within São Paulo's music scene came from her mastery of musical and cultural references which, it should be recalled, is related to her training in an African capital with international influences, her family heritage, her experience of traveling, her knowledge of a cosmopolitan repertoire of contemporary popular music and her study of classical music. In other words, Lenna arrived in Brazil more like a global musician (or an "international artist," as Yannick and other musicians prefer to put it) than a Mozambican singer.

On her arrival in São Paulo, everyone – musicians and general public alike – asked about her roots, her African reference points. This curiosity surprised her: "It was a moment of questioning my Africanity, my culture. I had to look at myself to discover how much of a Mozambican existed within me. And so I fell back in love with this culture," she told us in an interview conducted on the day we met her, at a show with her quartet held at the Museu da Imigração in São Paulo.[12]

While the curiosity of São Paulo's public compelled her to look back at her origins, it also revealed to Lenna a very unnuanced view about the cultural and artistic diversity of the African continent:

9 | Lenna Bahule's CD *Nômade* was selected as one of the 100 best Brazilian albums of 2016 by Embrulhador, a leading musical review website on Brazilian popular music.

10 | The films mentioned here, as well as other research materials, can be consulted on the website http://www.usp.br/afrosampas. We suggest that the reader watches the films due to their vital role in the knowledge project presented here.

11 | Hannerz describes different types of cosmopolitanism. Citing Piot and his research with farmers in Togo, he proposes conceiving as cosmopolitan not just residents of megapolises but also those living in situations involving " flux, uncertainty, encounters with difference, and the experience of processes of transculturation" (Piot, 1999, cited in Hannerz, 2006:15).

12 | The interview was recorded on the video *Lenna*, available at https://vimeo.com/181981199.

> *When I arrived, I had the feeling that there was a very stereotypical view of what I might be bringing artistically, musically. There existed a certain expectation of... let's be clear, generalizing, exaggerating completely: drums, dancing, fabrics, paintings and leaping about... and I'm the complete opposite. I'm like that at home, but on stage I pursue another art, another form of relating to music, understanding that this difference exists, that there are various Africas, right? It's something still very new to Brazilians.* (Interview with Lenna, 2017)[13]

13 | This and the following statements by Lenna are excerpts from conversations and interviews recorded in the film *Woya Hayi Mawe - Para onde vais?* also available at https://vimeo.com/lisausp/woyahayimawept.

If the enormous cultural diversity of a continent was a novelty for Brazilians, the Mozambican was astonished by Brazil's racism. Living in an upper-middle class district of São Paulo, Lenna discovered that she was "perhaps the only black resident." After also working in the metropolitan periphery with the Clarianas, a group of Afro-Brazilian artists based in Taboão da Serra, Lenna learnt the racialized geography of the megapolis. In the peripheral region, she perceives that her body transforms, "it fits":

> *When I go to this space of the Clarianas, for example, located in Taboão da Serra, which is in the periphery, when I go to the South Zone, it's very different. My body seems to fit there: Hey, I'm at home!' I identify a lot because the majority are black. So, I identify, my body fits naturally. If I go somewhere else, you practically don't see anyone black, my body reacts. So, this was the biggest shock for me, seeing how much my body was changing*. (Interview with Lenna, 2017)

Lenna made this reflection in an interview given to a Mozambican journalist in a restaurant in Maputo, which we filmed when we accompanied her on a day dedicated to the media (radio, TV, newspapers) to publicize her show "Nômades" at the French-Mozambican Cultural Centre. Returning to her homeland and her fellow Mozambicans, Lenna has to explain her experience of racism in Brazil and the new perception of herself as a black woman in a country where 56.2% of the population identifies as black or brown.[14]

14 | According to data from IBGE (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua Anual - PNAD 2019), the total population of Brazil is 209.4 million with 19.7 million people declaring themselves black and 98.1 million brown.

> *In the land of black people ["terra de preto"], we don't have to be black, right? We simply are. Here [in Mozambique] we have other kinds of prejudices. Here we find some rich black people: there are rich blacks and poor blacks, right? Just those. But there [in Brazil], most black people are poor. So, as well as having racism over skin colour, there is also an economic racism. I would venture to say that I'm probably the only black woman living in my district [in São Paulo]*. (Interview with Lenna, 2017)

Despite recognizing the economic inequality of her country of origin, Lenna affirms that she first experienced racism in São Paulo: in a visit to the supermarket in a "wealthy" district in which no black people could be seen, save for the workers, and also in her recognition of other bodies in the poor and peripheral district. Looking at this experience from a distance, back in her homeland, she associates the Brazilian racial experience with her role as a black African artist in Brazil:

> *This is why the question of negritude in Brazil is closely linked to belonging, it's linked to identity. The ancestors of Brazil's black people faced a lengthy process of leaving their land, imprisonment, enslavement. So, you already weren't speaking your language, you had already been taken from your land, so you had to find another form... It meant cutting away the culture, the identity, at the root. Removing it completely and leaving nothing, not even a chance of being able to germinate again. So, when they come back here, if he knows that his great-grandfather is here, he is thirsty to know where he is. Because I've lived abroad, I think about this a lot: it's painful for us not to know where we are from.* (Interview with Lenna, 2017)

This thirst for knowledge is observable in the way in which Lenna and other African artists and musicians in Brazil are approached by Afro-Brazilian cultural movements or institutions with cultural policies promoting diversity as legitimate representatives of the culture of their country, and sometimes of the entire continent. Lenna perceives that in Brazil her presence and her *musicking* are, for the Brazilian public, a gateway to their own roots.

Ulrike Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou (2006) developed the concept of transcultural capital to describe the resources, networks and connections that immigrant artists use in their creative work. Accompanying transnational musicians coming from Madagascar, Meinhof shows how "for many artists the strategic potential of their transcultural capital emerged as an ability to play the ethnic-diasporic and the cosmopolitan card at the same time" (Glick-Schiller and Meinhof, 2011: 30). The musicians with whom Meinhof worked see their use of transcultural capital "as both a creative necessity *and* a limitation, a nostalgic identification *and* a strategic tool for surviving as a professional musician" (Glick-Schiller and Meinhof, 2011: 30).

In São Paulo, we have seen how African artists like Lenna and Yannick maintain and develop diasporic networks and identities: the experience of living in Brazil also amplifies their transcultural capital. On her return to Maputo, for example, Lenna bears with her the "fame" of having achieved success in the country that exports culture to Mozambique. In São Paulo, her cosmopolitan cultural capital is valorised both for her mastery of transcultural references and for her origin and blackness. Lenna's Africanity and negritude are important currencies in the world of Afro-Brazilian cultural movements and among cosmopolitan Paulistas interested in broadening their musical reference points. Lenna adds value both for those searching for their roots and for those who consider themselves "tuned" in to 'world music'.

Accompanying Lenna allows us to see how the experience of the diaspora is transformative: leaving Mozambique as a young cosmopolitan musician, Lenna assumes a position in Brazil that, following Mbembe, we describe as "Afropolitan." The Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe defines *Afropolitanism* as "an aesthetic and a particular poetics of the world" (Mbembe, 2017: 106), which rejects victimizing identities; a "transnational culture" developed by Africans who, like Lenna, decide

to live outside of Africa, or within Africa but not in their countries of birth, many of whom "have had the opportunity to experience several worlds in their ceaseless comings and goings, developing an invaluable wealth of perceptivity and sensitivity in the course of movement" (ibid: 107). In the conversation with the journalist from her homeland, the mark of diasporic experience becomes clear. It was necessary to travel, to become a nomad, in order to perceive herself as part of a community, this extended community that Yannick Delass will call, as we shall see below, a "black people."

"GRINGO, BLACK AND POOR": MUSICKING, ARTIVISM, LOCALITIES

We met Yannick Delass a few weeks after his arrival in São Paulo, at the beginning of 2016. He was the one who contacted us, having heard about our research through a mutual friend. He presented himself as an immigrant musician, an international artist who came to Brazil for the first time in 2014 to work with music.

We invited Yannick to a debate in the Art Residency of the Cambridge Occupation[15] on music and immigration. On this day we introduced him to Shambuyi Wetu, a Congolese performer who would become an important partner and friend, as well as other African artists also invited by the residency's organizing artists. In a room with Brazilian and immigrant artists, Yannick stated that he did not identify with the status of immigrant or refugee, insisting on his wish to be recognised as an international artist on the Brazilian music scene. One of the residents of the Cambridge Occupation was the Congolese lawyer and chef Pitchou Luambo, presented at the beginning of this article. In dialogue with the housing movement, Pitchou organised GRIST. One of the group's actions was to promote artistic and cultural activities. It was through GRIST that Yannick Delass would make his debut on São Paulo's stages at the show for the First World Refugee Day Festival, organised by the Independent Front of Refugees and Immigrants (FIRI),[16] on 19 June 2016, behind the Cambridge Hotel Occupation, under the 9 de Julho viaduct in the centre of São Paulo.

The street stage was framed by colourful graffiti on the viaduct, slogans against the coup that would soon oust President Dilma Rousseff, some encampments of the homeless and an enormous Palestinian flag fluttering over the audience. In the street, a Senegalese woman sold fabrics and taught Paulistas how to tie a turban. The queue for the *shawarma* was long at the restaurant selling Arab cuisine, which became a meeting point for refugees and sympathizers of the cause, but which today also sells *fufu* – a food of central and west Africa.

At the festival, Yannick sang a cappella in various African languages (Lingala, Kimbundu, Kikongo) and in Creole, Portuguese and French, accompanied by his guitar and also by Congolese musicians from the gospel group Os Escolhidos. He also made a speech in Portuguese and French to an audience of dozens of people, most of them

15 | The Cambridge Artistic Residency was launched in 2016, proposed by Juliana Caffé, Yudi Rafael and Alex Flynn, in a "complex relationship between art and activism," at the Cambridge Hotel Occupation, coordinated by MSTC (*Movimento dos Sem Teto do Centro*: City Centre Homeless Movement), a building occupied by the São Paulo housing movement with around 550 residents. Through workshops, a film club and talks, they promoted the encounter between occupation residents and a public "sympathetic to the housing issue" but unfamiliar with the Cambridge Hotel (Lira, 2016).

16 | TN: In Portuguese, *Frente Independente de Refugiados e Imigrantes*.

supporters of the housing movement and the refugee cause, and some passers-by walking through this area of the city centre.

In his show, Yannick welcomed on stage his fellow Congolese Pitchou Luambo and Shambuyi Wetu. The former talked about the reason behind the festival, the refugee cause, while the latter made a performance wrapped in newspapers, mobile phone casings and red paint, entitled "Não à guerra do Congo" (No to Congo's War).[17] On stage, Yannick sang "Biliwe," with some verses in Portuguese: "Enough corruption / Enough manipulation / Enough racism / Enough xenophobia / Enough imperialism / Enough injustice / Enough hypocrisy."[18] His song names the African continent, not specific countries. And his lyrics refer to a condition that could be our own in Brazil: "The blacks without access to quality education in Babylonia / Discriminated in the public parks, shot by police, accused of crimes that were never committed." In French, he asserts: "C'ést la guerre." And in the mixture of languages that characterizes his music and his diasporic condition, he concludes: "Et toi l'Afrique, et toi povo preto, abre os olhos!" (And you Africa, and you black people, open your eyes!).

This festival took place a few weeks after the meeting at the Cambridge Occupation where Yannick had come into contact with the artivist movement[19] and the immigrant and refugee cause. While the artist had insisted on his identity as an international musician, on the Refugee Day he seemed to be aware of the role he had been called to perform: his song is openly political; in his discourse, the Pan-Africanist evocation of negritude emerges clearly; "the black people" take the stage.[20] "This music serves to speak about where I come from, Africa, but I think it also serves for us too. But I sing about the reality of my land."

The explanation, made on stage, reveals the necessary caution taken by the immigrant musician, who was in Brazil at a moment of significant democratic losses, and where foreigners lacked the right to political expression. During the manifestations against the coup in 2016, we were reminded that the Foreigner Statute was in force (Law no. 6815/80, art.107), a law instituted during Brazil's dictatorship which stipulated that foreigners permitted to stay in the country could not exercise *any kind* of political activity, nor take part in parades, marches, rallies and meetings of any kind in Brazil, subjecting the offender to a penalty of one to three years in prison and expulsion from the country.[21] Observing this entrance of Yannick into a São Paulo music scene, we can presume that, despite his reluctance to identify with the refugee or immigrant status, Yannick accepted the role of leading and representing a cause and adapted his musical discourse to this reality.

Yannick's trajectory teaches us about an aspect of African music making in São Paulo: its association with activism centring around the issues of the rights of immigrants and refugees and those of the movement for housing and citizenship. In his musicking on the stages of São Paulo's artivism, Yannick, adverse to labels and resistant to identifications, belongs to a kind of musical community. For Kay Shelemay (2011: 365),

17 | The performance "Não à guerra do Congo" and the song "Biliwe" are shown in the video available at vimeo.com/lisausp/biliwe

18 | TN: In Portuguese, *Chega, corrupção / Chega, manipulação / Chega, racismo / Chega, xenofobia / Chega, imperialismo / Chega, injustiça / Chega, hipocrisia*.

19 | Artivism, as Raposo (2015) discusses, is an unstable concept that encompasses the connections between art and politics, when art is an act of resistance and subversion. Flynn (2016) discusses artivism and the porous boundaries between contemporary art and social movements.

20 | In the encounter at the Cambridge Occupation, Yannick heard from his countryman Tresor Muteba, a Congolese artist, who had already been living in São Paulo for some time: "I arrived here with a student visa, not as a refugee, but I didn't know that Brazil was racist or that the cost of living was so high. I lived in shelters with other refugees. I don't know if the condition of the immigrant and the refugee are so different." This shared experience perhaps made Yannick rethink the distance between the experiences of the immigrant and the refugee in Brazil, given that both are marked by the fragility derived from the reality of social exclusion and racism lived by the 'black people.'"

21 | This law was revoked at the end of 2016, but Jair Bolsonaro declared his opposition to the new Migration Law, Law 13.445/17, asserting that "nobody wants to allow a certain kind of people inside their home..."

"a musical community is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves." We can observe this moment in which Yannick, in the encounter with other actors involved in this scene that is both musical and activist, becomes aware of this connection that affects and is affected by his musicking.

> *Speaking about the hospitality of a people is one thing. Speaking about the hospitality of a country is another. It's one thing when I'm here with a Brazilian inviting me to have a coffee at his home, to dine, to come and stay. That's the hospitality of the people. Now, when we say there's no cultural hospitality, it [really] doesn't exist. The public apparatus, the laws, they are not ready to welcome the music of other nations. Many proposals for promoting culture don't offer the possibility for migrants to enroll.* (Yannick, speaking in the film *Afro-Sampas*, 2020)[22]

22 | This and the following dialogues from Yannick feature in the film *Afro-Sampas*; a full-length version is available at https://lisa.fflch.usp.br/afrosampas.

In a scene recorded for the film *Afro-Sampas* in December 2018, Yannick Delass, at home, opens a folder with dozens of documents, presenting himself not only as a musician but as an entrepreneur in the area of culture, who has to learn the language of the market and the cultural promotion laws in Brazil. He criticizes the lack of welcome for foreign artists shown by Brazilian public institutions. He creates the concept of *cultural hospitality* and differentiates it from the hospitality of the Brazilian people – who welcome him and take him in – and that of the state, which does not provide mechanisms for foreigners to be able to apply for funding in the culture sector.

In 2017, Yannick created the project Gringa Music, which he defines on its Facebook page as "a stage for world music presenting high-quality music by immigrants living in São Paulo." The same page lists the project's objectives, among them the aim to "revolutionize" the music scene in São Paulo and "break invisible musical barriers that immigrant musicians confront in the city." These barriers included the "labelling" of his music and the "devalorising of the music" of immigrants. Initially, Gringa Music took place every Wednesday at Al Janiah, with presentations by immigrant musicians from different countries and continents. Al Janiah is a bar, restaurant and a "political and cultural" space founded in 2016 by a Palestinian-Brazilian, an activist from the Movimento Palestina para Tod@s (Palestine Movement for Everyone), close to the Cambridge Hotel Occupation. Subsequently, it moved to a large space in Bixiga with a seating capacity for 180 people, almost always packed. On Wednesdays, the stage was taken over by Yannick's musical curatorship. Not only were African musicians presented as part of this project but those from other continents too: Asia, Europe, Latin and Central America, the Middle East. Yannick took the project to other spaces in São Paulo, such as the Mário de Andrade Library and, in 2021, with the pandemic and the need for social isolation, the presentations took place weekly online, disseminated via Facebook, with support from the Aldir Blanc Law.[23]

23 | The Aldir Blanc Emergency Cultural Law (Law no. 14.017/2020) establishes mechanisms and criteria for providing support for culture workers and maintaining cultural territories/spaces whose activities were interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Two of Yannick Delass's projects received funding: Gringa Music (supported by the Proac Program for "Production and realization of the culture and creative economy festival with online presentations") and Congo Ancestral (supported by the Proac Expresso Program for "Production and season of music shows with online presentations").

"I situate myself as a foreigner: gringo, black, poor. And I try to propose something based on the experience of others." Yannick plays with identity categories, giving fresh meaning to terms for constructing performance spaces in the São Paulo music scene. Africans, Latin Americans, Arabs and Asians "become" gringos in Yannick's rereading of a term that in Brazil is usually attributed to white foreigners, principally those from the United States. From "his place," the Congolese mobilizes the identity of the immigrant and the black person with which he came into contact when he arrived in São Paulo, and is active in the construction of a scene, appropriating a cultural cosmopolitanism that he perceives in the city. In his personal trajectory and in contact with a São Paulo scene characterised by social and cultural movements, Yannick constructs his action in the field of cultural entrepreneurship as a producer of a scene that, besides being African or Congolese, is "gringo." With all the difficulties faced in navigating a universe that is complicated even for Brazilian artists, Yannick has won over institutional spaces, including in the world of public funding programs. While Brazil does not offer him the desired hospitality, the artist invents himself as a host for other immigrant musicians.

Since the start of this research in 2016, we have observed that African musicians in São Paulo work on diverse fronts, which we identify as public, private or institutional (Chalcraft and Hikiji, 2018). We have accompanied presentations by these artists in bars, restaurants and cultural centres, at events focused on world music, or on the refugee "cause," or on Afro-diasporic culture. Yannick Delass promoted Gringa Music at the Al Janiah restaurant and played at Fatiado Discos on an evening called "The Refugee Dinner," both private cultural spaces; he also took his curatorship projects to the Mário de Andrade Library, a public space, played at festivals promoted by organisations working on social issues (immigrants or homeless), and performed various shows at units of SESC, a nonprofitmaking private organisation, one of the main promoters of artistic activities in the country, aiming to stimulate what it defines as cultural diversity. These spaces, institutional or otherwise, public or private, are occupied by the musicking of immigrant artists, and over recent years we have observed the constitution of a music *scene* different to the Brazilian scene – perhaps a kind of world music.[24]

24 | Although São Paulo is a global megacity with aspects of its cultural scenes shared with places like London, New York and Berlin, a fundamental difference is the absence of 'world music'. In part, this is due to the categorisation of Brazil itself as a source of this genre of music. For the new artists of the African diaspora, the absence of world music in Brazil becomes a question, given that in Europe and the United States they could use their transcultural capital within the circuits of distribution and consumption of this musical genre. The complexity of the issue echoes some of the critiques made of the category world music: it is reductive, inconsistent, romantic and generally out of sync with musical genres, scenes and subcultures in the countries of origin. For a discussion of the use of the term world music in ethnomusicology and in the music market, see D'Amico (2020: 44-45).

"IT'S ART, IT'S CULTURE AND IT'S POLITICS": AFRODIASPORIC SOLIDARITY

Lenna Bahule, a cosmopolitan musician, perceived how Paulistas knew little about Africa's cultural diversity. Asking about her origins, her interlocutors had in mind a uniform, stereotyped Africa of "leaping about, fabrics, drums." To satisfy the demand for her Africanity, Lenna decided to search for artistic and affective references in her history and then presented the Paulistas with some of her discoveries. In São Paulo, she conducted workshops on Mozambican songs and games at institutions like SESC and the Emma Klabin Foundation. She brought the Mozambican artists Cheny Wa Gune and Xixel Langa to São Paulo, who performed with her both in the city's periphery (in

the Clariô space, in Taboão da Serra, where the Clarianas perform) and in the centre in the Casa de Francisca, one of the most renowned venues in São Paulo's city centre. In her compositions, whether in duet, quartet or in the Nômades project, she brings rhythms, histories and dances that she recuperated from her childhood memories and through musicological research. On the album *Nômades*, for example, Lenna sings a song from the Machope, a people from the south of Mozambique from where her father's family originates and with which she had contact through a book on Mozambican music. Only after presenting the music at a show did Lenna learn that the song actually belonged not just to her father's ethnic group but specifically to their family, the Baule. Lenna sings in other languages too, like KiSwahili and Changana/Ronga, but her research also led her to invent a language which she uses in some of her songs.

The language invented by Lenna refers to her origins and reveals difficult aspects of colonial linguistic policies and their impact in Mozambique. Until 2003, the local languages – 43 according to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (Berhard, Simons and Fennig, 2021) – were not taught in the country's schools and only recently have they begun to be accepted in public institutions.[25] In Brazil, we hear Lenna's songs with an "African" accent and are satisfied with the Africanity that she brings us. In Maputo, in an interview with a local radio station, asked by a journalist who did not recognise the language of one song, the composer admitted that she invented it. Lenna's creativity is her ingenious response to her country's colonial legacy.

Lenna's success in São Paulo, including the release of an album that was ranked among the top 100 records of 2016,[26] shows the openness of the public to a music that mixes Mozambican references with vocal improvisation, body percussion and the participation of leading instrumentalists from the São Paulo music scene, as well as compositions by fellow Mozambicans like Cheny Wa Gune. In São Paulo, Lenna encountered a cosmopolitan audience open to musical experiments that her transcultural capital allows her to achieve. As well as a public with a historical interest in Afro-diasporic cultures, her fans include "cultural omnivores" with an "openness to appreciating everything" (Peterson and Kern, 1996: 904), some more open politically and culturally, others more interested in showing off their knowledge of art, still limited to a cultural elite.[27]

This cultural capital, mobilized many times in the construction of her own artistic career, acquired activist dimensions in May 2019 when Lenna decided to promote a large show in support of Mozambique, which was reeling from the biggest natural tragedy in its history.[28] To stage "Somos Moçambique" (We Are Mozambique), Lenna gained the support of the Natura Musical show venue, their entire technical team and more than 40 Brazilian artists who took turns in a show lasting more than three hours, celebrating the "strong links that connect Brazil and Mozambique." The event was performed in front of an audience of more than 600 people, and the amount raised by the ticket sales (sold between 60 and 120 reais each) was donated via the Red Cross

25 | Approval of the use of Mozambican languages as official languages in the country's provincial assemblies only came in 2015. According to Lemos (2018), the General Population Census (2007) reports that 85.2% of Mozambicans speak various Bantu languages as their maternal tongue compared to 10.5% speaking Portuguese. Despite this fact, it was only in 2003 that bilingual education was implemented in schools, and then only partially (less than 10% of schools) and optionally. In other words, a linguistic hierarchy persists derived from the colonial period in which mastery of the European language is the key to social and economic mobility and, in the case of Mozambique, contributes to the linguistic colonization of the (predominantly Bantu-speaking) rural population by the preferred language of the urban elites.

26 | The album *Nômade* was listed among the top 100 of the year by the site Embrulhador.

27 | For a discussion of "cultural omnivores," see Chan (2019).

28 | Cyclone Idai was the strongest tropical cyclone to hit Mozambique since 2008. It caused serious flooding in the country, as well as in Madagascar, Malawi and Zimbabwe, leaving more than one thousand dead and affecting hundreds of thousands of people.

to provide aid to victims of the cyclone. Among the artists who took part for free in the event were Alessandra Leão, Anelis Assumpção, Anna Setton, Anna Tréa, Arnaldo Antunes, Batucada Tamarindo, Clarianas, Craca and Dani Negra, Curumin, Diego Moraes, Fabiana Cozza, Gumboot Dance Brasil, Horoya, Ian Cardoso, Illy, Jaloo, Josyara, Karol Conka, Kastrup, Lucas Santtana, Luedji Luna, Luiza Lian, Márcia Castro, Mc Tha, Mestrinho, Mondhoro, Nicolas Krassik, Nina Oliveira, Nômade, Otis, Pipoquinha, Preta Rara, Samba da Nega Duda, Samuca e a Selva, Simoninha, Timeline Trio, Tulipa Ruiz, Tuto Ferraz, Xênia França, among others. These were artists from diverse musical genres, many but not all of them Afro-Brazilian, some partners of Lenna in other collaborations.

Between each presentation,[29] the two presenters made comments in solidarity with Mozambique and at diverse moments the remarks of the musicians on stage cited not only the African nation but the *povo preto* (black people), uniting Brazil and Mozambique beyond the Portuguese language. In one of the longest presentations of the evening, and the only one not involving a musician, the State Deputy Erica Malunguinho made a powerful seventeen minute performance, accompanied only by the percussionists on stage. Erica is the first transwoman to be elected to a legislative assembly in Brazil, and is also creator of the Aparelha Luzia cultural space, dedicated to Afro-Brazilian art and self-defined as an "urban quilombo."[30]

Erica enters on stage, her body in motion, the dance of the orixá, greeting Exu, the sacred Jurema and other entities from Afro-Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian religions. She is applauded by the audience and by the musicians on stage. To the sound of the percussion, she chants rhythmic phrases, repeating them slowly several times: "This is what it is about, it's art, it's culture and it's politics." She repeats the phrase four times. "Preeetaaaa, preeetaaa, preeetaaa" (Blaaack, blaaack, blaaack). The shout/roll call resounds and summons: "Hail Mozambique, hail Haiti, hail Ethiopia, hail Nigeria, hail Itaim Paulista, hail Guaianases, hail Jardim Ângela..." Her performance combines African countries, countries of the Afro-diaspora and peripheral districts of São Paulo, most of them black and poor. She explains: "This means to say Mozambique is here, Guaianases is here, Itaim Paulista is here... The diaspora is here." The percussion gets louder. Erica continues to dance and play with her braids.

> *"Our footsteps come from afar, they come from Africa, the blacks from there, those who were already here, hail indigenous peoples. They come from the slave ships, the slave barracks, they come from the quilombos, the Quilombo dos Palmares, our only real and true government." (...) "They come from the maracatus, maculelês, from the semba to the samba, from the semba to the samba, from the semba to the samba."*
>
> Erica sambas now, she has samba in her feet.

29 | The show was broadcast by Canal Futura and is available on Facebook in two parts: https://fb.watch/40jLIJhC3_/ and https://fb.watch/40j2lI2L6q/

30 | Created in 2016, Aparelha Luzia hosted diverse performances by African artists recently arrived in São Paulo.

> *"Our footsteps come from very faraway, they come from the Haitian Revolution. Our footsteps come from the Black Panthers, from the Black Experimental Theatre, from the fight for quotas, from the black intelligentsia, they come from candomblé, they come from the domestic employee, from workers in the building industry, from the homeless, from prison, from crack..."*
>
> (Érica Malunguinho during a performance in Somos Moçambique, 2019)

Her discourse approximates local and transnational struggles and conditions, including Brazil, in a general history of anticolonial and socialist Afro-diasporic struggles. But this struggle is also black and feminine. "This narrative begins again with women, with us women... Blaaaack... Cis women and transsexual and transvestite." Erica then recites names: Angela Davis, Lélia Gonzales, Dona Ivone Lara; black women intellectuals, activists, artists. "Black is the root of freedom," she repeats four times. "Black lives matter, yes, they matter," four times. "The black fight speaks about itself but it is also for collective emancipation."

Lenna Bahule took to the stage soon after this powerful presentation by Erica Malunguinho. As the hostess of these 40 performers, almost all Brazilian, black, many of them women, Lenna enacts a reverse hospitality: on a São Paulo stage, she receives Brazilian musicians to support a Mozambican cause. "Mozambique, my land, thanks you. We Mozambicans have always seen Brazil as a reference point." She mentions the "disappointment, anguish and even a certain fear" of the times whose emergence she has witnessed over recent years. But alongside the fear, there is the "strong and powerful" art lived in São Paulo. Next, she makes her roll call, a call and response of protagonists of the "black people," to which the audience responds: "Present!" The pantheon celebrated combines Brazilian leaders in the field of politics and culture killed during this moment of "fear" (Marielle, Mestre Moa), artists, intellectuals and religious figures disseminating Afro-Brazilian culture (Raquel Trindade, Mãe Stella de Oxóssi, Beth Carvalho, Luiz Melodia, Beatriz Nascimento, Tula Pilar), warriors from the anti-colonial struggles in Brazil and Angola from the seventeenth century (Dandara, Rainha Nzinga), leaders of fights for Mozambican independence (Samora Machel, Josina Machel, Eduardo Mondlane) and the anti-apartheid struggle (the song "Mama África," Miriam Makeba) in the twentieth century.

This mega-event – more than just a show or an act of solidarity – acquired a dimension of "art, culture and politics" through the intervention of these two black women: a Mozambican woman living in São Paulo, a transsexual woman born in Pernambuco and a deputy for PSOL (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade) in São Paulo's Legislative Assembly. Their discourses – amid the diverse musical manifestations including rap, funk, Afrobeat, samba and other mixtures of the new MPB – create a world of imagination and political potentiality, a space for solidarity, inhabited by African and Afro-diasporic entities from past and present history, the anticolonial, anti-slavery, pan-Africanist struggles and artistic manifestations.

"*WARETHWA*", WE ARE TOGETHER: MUSICKING AND ACTION

Lenna closes her speech at the end of the mega-event "Somos Moçambique" by expressing thanks in Changana, *kanimambo*, and with the Chope expression *warethwa*, meaning "we are together." Enunciated in the language of her paternal family and in Portuguese, these words are evocative, provoking action. John Blacking, in *Music, Culture and Experience*, writes that music making is a "special kind of social action which can have important consequences for other kinds of social action" (Blacking, 1995: 223). The ethnomusicologist argues for the agency of music making beyond its merely reflexive potential. Music, more than "mere sound," is a language to communicate ideas. It does not necessarily make people act but can do so if a cultural and social disposition to action exists (ibid: 35-6). Music is not "directly political" but can generate "feelings and relationships between people that enable positive thinking and actions in fields that are not musical" (ibid: 198). Music is not the motor of change but can be an indispensable tool for the transformation of consciousness, "a first step to transforming social forms" (ibid: 232).

Observing the *musicking* of African immigrants and refugees in the city of São Paulo, tracing their networks, entering the spaces that they are constructing, listening to their calls and responses made us think about the potential of music beyond performance and entertainment. *Musicking* is revealed as social action which generates feelings, creates consciousness, promotes transformations, informs debates, constructs imaginaries, amplifies imaginations.

In "We Are Mozambique," Lenna Bahule's transcultural capital is mobilized in a context of transatlantic solidarities, catalysed by natural and social disasters: a tropical cyclone, structural racism. The encounter between African and Afro-Brazilian musicians and the creative entities evoked by them highlight the artistic power of resistance in different colonial histories. The "black people" addressed by Yannick Delass in his song under the viaduct acquires bod(y/ies) on this packed stage of the pro-Mozambique event. As well as the 40 or more musicians on the stage, entities from African history and its diaspora are convoked to recall the strength of antiracist and anticolonial struggles. The pantheon evoked and the performers present enact new political realities: they convoke a union, fundamental to overcoming the current "fear."

In diverse spheres, working as musicians, producers, promoters and educators between the stage and activism, Lenna, Yannick and other African musicians who confront the Paulicéia Desvairada[31] construct forms of action. In a mega-event, Lenna mobilizes her networks to unite people and institutions in an initiative in support of her country. But on stage, her artist friends, almost all Brazilians, also act in support of local causes – the tragedy (natural, social) is transnational. In his project of cultural action, Yannick mobilizes dozens of musicians, almost all foreigners, in support of a diverse music scene. Perceiving himself as "international," Yannick evinces the artistic

31 | "Paulicéia Desvairada" is the title of a book by Mário de Andrade, published in 1922, translated in English as"Hallucinated City". Paulicéia is a nickname for São Paulo.

potential of the transcultural encounter. And its cultural activism is constantly called upon to reinforce local and translocal struggles from the homeless to refugees.

For Kay Shelemay (2011), musical performance is an integral part of processes that can generate, shape and sustain new collectivities. In a moment of mobilities and cosmopolitanism, more than localized communities, we can think of "imagined" or "felt" communities.[32] This is the kind evoked as the "black people" in the musicking of Lenna Bahule, Érica Malunguinho or Yannick Delass. We also argue that imaginaries reconfigure the meanings and potentials of belonging for these artists from the diaspora: we have seen how Afropolitan transcultural capital is used and instrumentalized in their policies of musicking.

32 | In her article, Shelemay emphasizes the notions of Anderson (of the nation and even small villages as imagined political communities) and Cohen (of the community as a question of feelings, based on the sharing of musical performances or symbols).

Returning to Feld (2012) and his ethnography of the jazz scene in Accra, tradition can be a source of *movement*, a way of creating present and future cultures. More than a cultural resource – Africa as a place of "origins" without space to negotiate a true historical presence – Feld's interlocutors propose thinking about tradition as a "way of change," in a local version of the anthropological perspective of Marshall Sahlins. For Ghanaba, a musician from Ghana who made a career in the United States jazz scene in the 1950s and returned to his country in the 1960s, "if you want to move forward, go back to your roots." This concept of *sankofa* is illustrated by a bird that stretches its neck backwards to take an egg from its back. Afrofuturisms and utopias need a past, but not just a mythic past (an origin) but a past that recognises all the complexities of a complicated past.

Shelemay discusses how in the 1980s anthropology sought new models to think about *routes* instead of *roots*. In the 2000s, Mbembe (2007) and Selasi (2005) proposed with Afropolitanism a relativization of roots and primary belongings, the interest in the foreign, the strange, the domestication of the unfamiliar. Following the routes taken by nomad African artists, we observe this "cultural, historical and aesthetic sensitivity" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 105) in action, in a constant movement, whether between continents, between centre and periphery, or between stages and podiums.

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