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SOUND PRAXIS, POVERTY, AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM A COLLABORATIVE STUDY IN RIO DE JANEIRO

by Samuel Araújo and Vincenzo Cambria

A long-standing and pervading theme in fields of inquiry such as economics, sociology, health studies, human rights, or social policy, poverty has apparently not similarly impacted scholarship on music beyond the implicit recognition—more typically found in folklore, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies—that it may have conditioned to some degree music-making among given groups within a larger society or even among larger societal entities such as countries and continents. One problem likely hindering more theoretical approaches to music and poverty is the difficulty, so often expressed in the above-mentioned fields, of finding a universally acceptable definition of poverty (not forgetting that defining “music” is also far from unproblematic). A growing literature, mostly beyond music disciplines, accounts for the many possible determining factors behind such a definition—such as family or individual income, gross national product, formal employment rate, average cost of a minimal caloric diet,¹ access to basic sewage, and adequate housing—which may be adopted either in combination or in isolation. At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, economists such as Amartya Sen, Mahbub Ul Haq, Deepa Narayan, Celso Furtado, and others went further in the pursuit of a multidimensional approach, considering factors such as education, availability of natural resources, and political participation in defining the boundaries indexing situations of poverty. Sen’s (2010) definition of poverty as one’s privation of developing individual capacities has since become an influential source of public debate (Crespo and Gurovitz 2002).

This paper reflects upon ways in which sound praxis² and poverty are strongly and reciprocally implicated, stressing their conceptual links to forms of violence inscribed in day-to-day experiences. Its theoretical orientation stems from a relatively long-term experience of participatory-action research on music in Maré,³

1. The average cost of a minimum caloric diet has been used by the federal government in Brazil to measure poverty levels.

2. The sound praxis category is understood here as an “articulation between discourses, actions, and policies concerning sound, as it appears, quite often subtly or unnoticeably, in the daily experience of individuals, that is, for professional and amateur musicians, cultural agents, entrepreneurs, and legislators, among others; for groups such as musicians’ collectives and organized audiences; and for institutions such as school systems, corporations, labor unions, and both governmental and nongovernmental policy agencies” (Araújo and *Miscultura* 2010:219–20).

3. Since its beginning in 2004, this research has been supported by the National Centre for Scientific Research and Development (CNPq). At later stages, it also received support from the Rio de Janeiro State Foundation for Research, the Petrobrás Corporation, and the Brazilian Ministry of Culture. In its yearly, changing membership configuration so far, the research group has extensively published on related themes in: peer-reviewed articles, both in

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a mostly residential area in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that displays clear indicators of poverty according to any of the definitions mentioned above, a situation which leads to its identification as Rio's second largest favela⁴ area. In this research context, different aspects of poverty, stereotyping, forms of violence, and given patterns of social participation intertwine, constantly demanding a mix of both theoretical and practical (or applied) approaches, as they pervade past and present forms of sociability and play a determining role in the conditions and procedures of the research, from the more general to the more specific ones.

We will first situate briefly how the debate over definitions of poverty and policy-making strategies to combat poverty and socio-economic inequality in Brazil have conditioned the Maré research initiative, helping it to obtain continuous support from different research agencies in Brazil and, consequentially, achieve growing recognition at several public levels (e.g., within academia, and among the local population and political activists). We will then reflect upon the theoretical and methodological issues arising from both external and internal social perceptions concerning the lack of a valuable music scene worth any "serious" academic research in Maré, a sense of dispossession even evident in the discourses of a few self-conscious community organizers. In conclusion, we will argue for the significance of participatory-research methodologies and strategies to innovatively address the reciprocal implications of music, poverty, and violence and to inform a thorough criticism of socially constructed ideologies that reinforce problematic stereotypes outside and within favelas. In our final considerations, we will also consider this long-term participatory ethnography, structured upon an intensely self-reflexive process affecting both Maré residents and the academics involved, as part of an experimental moment in which fields such as ethnomusicology or anthropology are called to rethink their politico-epistemological grounds.

Poverty and inequality as multidimensional phenomena

Scholars of world economics seem to agree that debates on how to eradicate poverty would likely sound absurd from a Europeanized viewpoint before the nineteenth century. Until near the end of the eighteenth century, the accumulation and redistribution of resources in Europe and in its colonial, territorial domains were limited by the fact that being born, living, and dying in poverty were realities for the majority of the population (Schwartzman 2004). After the first signs that a capitalist economy could aspire to reduce if not completely eradicate poverty, early nineteenth-century debates in Europe on the theme were based on either moral or rational perceptions of causes. Distinctions such as that between involuntary and voluntary forms of poverty, for example, resulted from this approach. Besides

Brazil and abroad (Araújo and Musicultura 2006a, 2006b; Araújo 2008, 2009, 2012); book chapters (Araújo and Musicultura 2010; Cambria 2008; Musicultura 2011a, 2011b); as well as master's theses (Duque 2007; Andrade Silva 2009; Dias da Silva 2011; Salustriano da Silva 2010) and a doctoral dissertation (Cambria 2012).

4. The term favela is analysed more closely later in this article.

locating causes, those debates sometimes also assessed poverty's social effects as revolutionary (proletariat) or reactionary (lumpenproletariat). These or similar lines of reasoning have variably fed academic discussions since then as well as social policies and commonsensical notions that are still present in certain social circles of the postcolonial world.

Also, reflections on issues of musical hierarchies have been as significant in Brazil as elsewhere in former European colonies (Sardo 2011). They have clearly impacted discussions on whether the emergence of an elite-oriented music that is simultaneously "universal" and "singular" is necessary or not in the context of the contested celebration of popular forms which are thought of as conveying regressive national, regional, or local identities. The axis of poverty/development, sometimes clearly articulated as such, not only played a key role in these aesthetic debates, but also attributed to aesthetic disputes a structuring aspect of social dynamics, generally speaking. It is worth revisiting a few relatively recent developments in Brazilian history in order to make clearer the relationship between poverty reduction on the one hand, and culture and sound praxis on the other.

The inauguration in 2003 of the first-elected federal administration led by a metal worker—who had always stressed his own socio-economically determined migration, famine, and poverty as part of his formative experiences in Brazilian politics—was received with great expectation by some and with explicit suspicion by others. One new federal programme, the Famine and Poverty Eradication Programme (popularly known as *Fome Zero*, meaning zero famine) polarized these views further. This programme was designed to centralize the then scattered direct-income-distribution programmes, and to foster partnerships among all levels of government as well as with the private sector. Its relative success in reducing income disparities in Brazil led to the programme's international recognition and replication in India and some other developing countries. Nevertheless, as a great deal of income concentration remains, one still cannot fail to spot poverty and inequality as key issues in this sociopolitical equation. They impact academic work on many topics, from assessing how and to what extent the new class composition that stems from the recent policies has produced significant cultural changes, to how to balance the so-called new middle-class's economic impact with higher standards in health care, culture, education, and political participation. The following discussion on a long-term participatory experience in music research attempts both to illustrate and reflect upon this ongoing process.

Poverty, inequality, and the political dimensions of intercultural dialogue

In 2001, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro hosted the 36th World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music. The relationships between ethnomusicologists and the people they work with was one of its four main themes. Based on the research projects of two graduate students (Cambria 2002; Marques 2003), the university's Ethnomusicology Laboratory, a research group then recently established, had already been developing readings and discussion on, and

practice in, academic collaboration with local community organizations in places where poverty and inequality, in the multidimensional sense emphasized here, were commonplace. The presentation at the conference of these studies and other examples of applied and collaborative work undertaken in Brazil and elsewhere attracted the attendance of representatives from non-governmental organizations based in Rio de Janeiro. Some of these NGOs already worked, or were looking to work, in line with what George Yúdice has identified as a mobilization of “culture as resource” (Yúdice 2003). This notion, in Yúdice’s argument, strongly resounds with a generalized worldview under the hegemony of neoliberalism, according to which answers to socio-economic inequalities should be sought, not through socialist ruptures with the status quo, but within the limits of a largely unregulated world economy. This view is also relatively coherent⁵ with the larger picture in the discussions of poverty and socio-economic development that we have highlighted above.

The first partnership that the Ethnomusicology Laboratory established with a favela-area NGO was initiated with the Centre for Studies and Solidarity Actions of Maré (Centro de Estudos e Ações Solidárias da Maré, henceforth CEASM). Maré is the more encompassing denomination by which is known a vast area of mostly undetermined contours, consisting of variously originated and sized favelas with a cumulative population of about 135,000 inhabitants.⁶ Initially, the collaboration between the Ethnomusicology Laboratory and CEASM was limited to meetings between a few university-based researchers and CEASM directors in one of the organization’s headquarters at Maré. These meetings aimed at the definition of possible common objectives and the elaboration of a joint project.

The first of these meetings exposed that underlying stereotypes of art, music, and, surely, poverty may frame such interactions. One of the directors, who had a university degree, was a city government employee, and was knowledgeable in both local history and general popular-music matters, expressed concern that perhaps academic research on music would find little if any “valuable” resources in the community. After a few minutes (and perhaps noticing the academic researchers’ placid reaction, almost as if they were expecting the statement), however, the same director slowly began to enumerate a long list of people, places, and musical

5. Let us not forget that, in the new perspectives highlighted above, one component of the measuring of and policing against poverty and inequality is political participation, a potentially volatile territory since poverty and inequality will always make it open to radical, anti-status-quo thought and action.

6. CEASM was created in 1997 by a group of residents and former residents, some of whom had previous engagements with political parties, neighbourhood associations, or Catholic Church entities, such as the Ecclesiastic Base Communities linked to liberation theology, all of which were inspired by ideals of “direct democracy” developed from “the bottom up” through participatory dialogue. With no familiarity with the field of ethnomusicology, CEASM directors hosted occasional workshops from 1995 to 2003 that dealt with the teaching or building of musical instruments, in addition to a few performance workshops integrating music and theatre, and music and dance. They had, however, done solid previous work in the mapping of local social memory, which was undertaken by residents in a participatory manner.

practices found locally on which such research might perhaps still be initiated with good prospects. This, and many similar examples that followed in the ten-year institutional collaboration, showed from the beginning how dialogical strategies were to make possible the reversal of degrading, commonsensical evaluations of local musics and sound praxis by Maré residents who were involved.

After several similar meetings, we decided to conduct collaborative research, beginning with a series of group discussions on music and community-related matters with selected university and high-school students residing in Maré. The resulting research collective received the name *Musicultura* (created by juxtaposing the words music and culture)—a name that its members chose themselves. Following the participatory principles of Paulo Freire's pedagogy (1970), based on critical notions of autonomy and dialogue, the university researchers acted as mediators, sometimes provoking discussions on the local soundscapes and realities, or bringing new perspectives to heated discussions among residents, while at other times simply remaining silent and listening.⁷

What Freire (1970) called the "culture of silence" prevailed for a few months during these encounters. The resident participants would not risk extended commentaries or go beyond bringing up personal accounts of immediate facts or, at most, their own personal reaction to them (e.g., brief evaluative references to musical taste). Gradually, however, group discussions began to go beyond individual and immediate perceptions and towards more reflexive comments resulting from the increased exercise of distancing, and the absorption of non-immediate references (e.g., short readings selected from academic or journalistic texts, and videos suggested by the university participants), which at times corroborated, widened, or aided in rethinking direct experience. After nine to ten months of meetings, the resident participants felt more at ease to lead the discussions themselves, including ones on the sometimes conflicting variety of their own personal musical tastes, criteria, and values, and depended less on designated mediators to define and devise their research interests and strategies. This increased participation never dissipated the differences between residents and non-residents, or among residents themselves. However, it made viable what at first did not appear as such: the juxtaposition of different subject stances that were frequently in enduring or even endless contradictions. Despite being common to all human collectives, this aspect of coexistence is too often obliterated in academic analyses in favour of oversimplifying generalizations.

The music of favelas: Poverty and symbolic violence

Favelas (commonly rendered in English as slums, shantytowns, or squatter settlements) can be seen as a result of a long struggle for the "right to the city"

7. The basic idea, as suggested by Paulo Freire (1970), is that the divides between learning and knowing mediated by self-experienced research can be broken down little by little, and a new comprehension of the educational process, one which is not only instrumental but also political, is potentially ready to be apprehended.

(Lefebvre 2006) perpetuated, since the end of the nineteenth century, by masses from the lowest part of Rio de Janeiro's working class that could not wait for effective public housing policies from the state. Their enduring existence, however, reflects also the interests of capitalist and political elites in maintaining the residents' precariousness in terms of a citizen's rights to exploit the cheap, unskilled work force they represent and to assure a lasting clientelist system (which is the basis for vote bargaining in the electoral arena). Despite today representing heterogeneous topographical and social spaces of the city of Rio de Janeiro, favelas have always been considered homogeneously as "places of absence," defined more for what they supposedly lack than for what they actually are or have (Machado da Silva 2002; Souza e Silva and Barbosa 2005). The very common designation *comunidades carentes* (meaning "lacking communities" or "communities of have-nots"), used by many as a more "politically correct" way to refer to favelas, is symptomatic of this general attitude. Poverty (in the meaning of lack of minimum financial and living conditions) surely represents the basic dimension of lack attributed to favelas and their residents. This uncritical idea of absence that is central to most common-sense views about favelas includes, however, many other lacks, such as lack of order and legality, lack of infrastructure, lack of education, lack of healthy conditions, lack of job opportunities, lack of knowledge, lack of security, lack of culture, lack of moral and civic values, etc. Such an all-encompassing association of lack with favelas for a long time represented a central assumption behind most of the actions carried out in favelas by the state, non-governmental organizations, and most university outreach projects, which have almost always aimed at bringing something to them.

With the increased disengagement of the state from social politics that characterized the 1990s, the so-called third sector (comprised of NGOs, foundations, associations, and institutes) gained a prominent role as the response by civil society to pressing needs in the public sphere. The various views of lack, taken in isolation or in different combinations, represented the focus of action for the initiatives carried out by third-sector institutions within favelas. Cultural practices such as dance, theatre, circus, and music, among others, were mobilized as powerful "expedients" (Yúdice 2003) to fill these gaps and, ultimately, to achieve social change. Through these cultural activities, NGOs of different kinds and dimensions, working mainly with favela youth (and often considering them as potential criminals to be rescued), have tried to achieve some of the following immediate goals: (a) to strengthen a sense of solidarity and citizenship among the young participants; (b) to professionalize them as artists and, consequently, make them able to generate an income; (c) to create positive images of success for stigmatized individuals and communities; and (d) to provide attractive alternatives to the involvement of youth in drug trafficking and in violent forms of sociability. Besides the general interest youth have in them, the central role that musical activities have assumed within these initiatives is mainly due to the fact that they offer the opportunity to combine three commonsensical ideas relating music and favela residents: (1) that music (i.e., "good music") is something that favela residents lack; (2) that music is an intrinsically "good" practice that needs to be encouraged as a means

to foster the resolution of conflicts and to overcome violence; and (3) that favela residents are “natural” musical talents in need of an opportunity to improve and build up successful careers (Cambria 2012). This last idea largely derives from a long-standing stereotype of Afro-Brazilians being musically gifted. Using these ideas as strong arguments, NGO programmes with music have proliferated in the last twenty years, obtaining private and public support at local, national, and international levels.

The various programmes differ in size, availability of resources, and continuity over time and, consequently, in the efficacy of their work. The activities they carry out mostly relate to music education, specifically music theory and the teaching of specific musical instruments, and to the creation and maintenance of performance groups. The choice of musical instruments (e.g., recorders, orchestral string instruments, acoustic guitars, and wind instruments), repertoires (most commonly, easy “classical” music pieces, MPB—Brazilian popular music—songs, and folkloric tunes), and performance groups (recorder ensembles, choirs, small orchestras, and big bands) is indicative of the little dialogue that these initiatives have with the musical practices that characterize the daily life of favela residents. Even if sometimes presenting different specific goals, most of the programmes are based on the same conventional (and, often, questionable) activities, methods, and ideas about music and music education. The practices involved in the musical activities of these institutions are usually seen as external to the community by their proponents, the latter’s role mainly being to represent a bridge enabling access to them. This is the most usual meaning of the idea of “democratization of culture,” central both in the post-dictatorship (late-1980s), poverty-eradication state programmes alluded to above and in the context of the third-sector organizations working with cultural activities.

Local musical practices, besides not being incorporated in their activities and not finding support from those institutions, are also commonly presented negatively in the organizations’ proposals and reports to their sponsors, sometimes to exemplify how opportune and “urgent” their musical actions would be. The students of these programmes, also, are not seen as holders of rich and diversified previous musical experiences, but as *tabula rasa*. This almost systematic denigration of local musical experiences clearly contradicts the discourse of most of these programmes pointing to the raising of the youth’s self-esteem as one of their main goals.

This concern, expressed during our first meeting by one of the directors of the NGO with which the Ethnomusicology Laboratory had been collaborating, is also symptomatic of the general idea of lack. He was alerting us that there were no famous, popular musicians born (or living) in Maré, no prestigious samba schools, and no active folk traditions there, in other words, the kind of things he thought academic researchers could be interested in. He was also implicitly assuming a critical stance in relation to the musical practices that are most common today in Maré and other favelas of Rio, such as funk, *pagode*, and *farró*, considering them as representing bad taste and, therefore, not deserving study, much less preservation. This negative attitude can be read as reflecting what Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant define as “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 2000;

Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 2002), a concept coined by them to define the power that is exerted by dominant ideologies and discourses through the construction and naturalization of a reality that denies and oppresses the dominated “others” within a society. In many ways similar to what Antonio Gramsci (1971) defined as “hegemony,” this form of domination is characterized by the fact that it is not usually recognized as such. Gramsci’s hegemony is based either on the “spontaneous consent” to domination by the subordinated masses or on the coercive power of the state (ibid.:12). In both cases, the domination is explicit. Symbolic violence, by contrast, is based on the “misrecognition” of domination. In this case, domination is naturalized as a result of the unconscious “inscription of social structures in bodies” (Bourdieu 2000:172), that is, of the hidden work of “habitus.” If hegemony based on the consent of subordinated groups is not necessarily violent (the consent is won by the hegemonic elite and given by the dominated group in exchange for some immediate benefit), symbolic violence deserves its name since it is based on the hidden imposition of an “order of things,” naturalized as common sense, that silences competing understandings of reality and prevents people from seeing (and, therefore, challenging) the domination to which they are subjected. Within this theoretical perspective, the feeling of a “poverty of culture” expressed by our interlocutor in Maré, and clearly perceptible behind most of the initiatives carried out by third-sector organizations within the favelas of the city, is the result of the accumulation over time of different discourses, which have acquired the status of “truths” and appear now as obvious (almost natural) facts.

The musics produced and circulating in Rio’s favelas today reflect more than a century of intense (in Sen’s terms, potentially enriching) fluxes of people and expressive cultural practices coming from both within and beyond the city, the most heterogeneous influences coming from national and global flows of more or less commoditized sounds, and the creative solutions their residents have developed over time to deal with the pleasures and pains of everyday life. The ways in which these musics are perceived and experienced also need to be understood as resulting from the social dynamics that have historically defined the city, its socially unequal spaces, and the ways in which they relate to each other.

The great diversity of musical practices and experiences that characterize the soundscape of favelas is well captured by a quantitative survey both conceived and carried out in Maré by the *Musicultura* group in 2006.⁸ One of its clearest results is that when 929 respondents were asked about the kinds of music they liked most, 152 different answers were given. If not all the musical genres cited in this survey have developed a visible, live scene within Maré, a number of them—such as *fórró*, *pagode*, rock, evangelical music, samba, funk, and *sertaneja*—are quite regularly performed.

In contrast to this abundance and variety, funk is usually the first musical genre highlighted in public discourses as characteristic of favelas and is almost

8. The group administered a questionnaire to 929 residents of two of the localities that form the Maré neighbourhood, enquiring about their musical preferences, participation (both as performers and as audiences), and consumption. More information about this survey and its results can be found in *Musicultura* (2011a) and *Cambria* (2012).

always singled out as the only musical practice found in those areas. This music and the practices related to it have gradually assumed the commonsensical position of being the most representative expression of favelas. Before funk, this position had long been occupied by samba. Given their association with both favelas and the impoverished black population residing within them, both of these musical expressions have suffered strong prejudice and repression. Before being paradoxically transformed into one of the main symbols of the nation, samba had been singled out in the early twentieth century as one of the best examples of the “backward” and “barbarous” habits characterizing the then emerging favelas. The genre was stigmatized as an assault to morality and, therefore, feared and repressed as a practice fostering social disorder and degradation. The same kind of rejection and prejudice is being experienced by funk music and the people producing or enjoying it since they gained visibility in the 1980s and, particularly, the 1990s. *Funk carioca*⁹ is an electronic, dance-music genre that developed in Rio de Janeiro in the 1980s (after the long influence of American black music during the 1960s and, especially, the 1970s). It mixes elements of the hip-hop style known as *Miami bass* with Afro-Brazilian rhythms.¹⁰ This music flourished within Rio de Janeiro’s favelas after the dance parties that were organized around it in many suburban areas were forced to discontinue. While middle and upper classes initially saw the funk movement as a distant barbaric reality not affecting them, it did not take too long for them to start feeling uncomfortable when they perceived that their contact with it was inevitable. On the one hand, especially during the 1990s, their youth began to go to favelas to frequent *bailes funk* (funk dance parties) and, on the other, funk music and the people making it were visibly entering their social and physical space. The association of this music with the drug-trafficking factions controlling many favelas of the city (in the funk subgenre called *proibidão*, “highly prohibited”) and the increasing use of explicit sexual content in its lyrics (especially in the subgenre commonly called *funk putaria*, “whoredom funk”) led to its public demonization and persecution. This situation reached a critical state when funk music and its parties were the target of an official investigation by a parliament inquiry commission of the legislative state assembly of Rio de Janeiro in 1999. This was the beginning of a very controversial, long (and also symptomatic) series of legislative actions taken by the state government, and aimed at limiting and regulating this musical culture.¹¹

A clear example of the stigma attached to this music appeared in the survey conducted by the Musicultura group in Maré. Despite a visible love for this music among Maré youth, hundreds (sometimes, even thousands) of whom fill the dance

9. The qualifier *carioca*, meaning “from Rio de Janeiro” and being rare in everyday speech, is used to distinguish it from American funk.

10. For more information on this music and the parties organized around it, see Essinger (2005), Palombini (2010, 2013), and Cambria (2012).

11. While initially criminalized and submitted to many legal restrictions and requirements, funk music subsequently achieved a curious and unprecedented official recognition by the Rio de Janeiro state government as a legitimate “cultural and musical movement” that could not be discriminated against. A detailed analysis of this process and of recent legal controversies surrounding this music and its musicians can be found in Palombini (2013).

parties organized there every weekend, only a little more than 6% of the respondents declared that they enjoyed it.¹²

The other musical practices that are more common in the favelas of the city are also negatively represented, even if for other reasons. The cases of *pagode* and *fórró eletrônico* (“electronic *fórró*”), thriving in Maré and other Rio favelas, exemplify this issue. Both of these musics are contemporary, pop-oriented developments of older practices (samba and “traditional” *fórró*, respectively), which are considered fundamental “roots” of Brazilian popular culture.

Pagode is a samba-derived musical style that emerged in the mid-1970s in some Rio de Janeiro’s working-class suburbs. It started in informal backyard gatherings where new instruments were introduced, such as the four-stringed banjo, *repique de mão* mid-pitched drum, and *tan-tan* hand-drums, and some samba styles were reinvented, mainly the *partido alto* style. After the commercial success achieved by this new style in the 1980s, a more pop-influenced type of *pagode*—with electric instruments, either love-celebrating or love-lamenting lyrics, and, usually, a slower tempo—invaded the national music market in the 1990s. While in the last decade the success of this “romantic *pagode*,” as it is commonly called, has significantly diminished in the Brazilian music market, it is still strong in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, where it represents one of the most popular musical styles.

Based on a series of northeastern dance-music styles—the most characteristic being *baião*, *xote*, *xaxado*, and *arrasta-pé*—*fórró* resulted from a complex process linking regional traditions, the national culture industry (especially Radio Nacional), and trans-regional migration. What today is considered “traditional” *fórró* is the style and repertoire popularized from the 1940s by figures such as Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro, who selectively and idiosyncratically put together elements from the rich rural traditions they grew up in and adapted them to the popular-music market of the time. Electronic *fórró* emerged in the first half of the 1990s, proposing a radically new format and sonic rendition for this music. Abandoning the simple acoustic instrumental formation that was established as characteristic of this music (the “trio” of accordion, triangle, and *zabumba* bass drum), electronic *fórró* bands have incorporated all kinds of electric, electronic, wind, and brass instruments, as well as drum sets and other percussion.

Both *pagode* and electronic *fórró* are seen by many from the middle and upper classes (especially the young and white, with a higher educational level) as regrettable, bad-taste corruptions of the “authentic” traditions of samba and *fórró*, and as representing a menace to their continuity. On the other hand, both of them are enthusiastically embraced in the favelas of the city by working-class (mostly black or northeastern) people, from whom these musical practices historically originated (both their “traditional” and “modern” versions) and within which many of them grew up, dealing with these musics as dynamic and elastic resources, adapting them to the new times and to changing experiences and needs.¹³

12. For an ethnographic account on Maré’s funk music scene, see Cambria (2012).

13. Bourdieu’s concept of “distinction” (Bourdieu 1984), directly related to the process of cultural domination that he defined as symbolic violence, can also be useful to understand the described class distancing by means of aesthetic choices and tastes. A deeper discussion

Taken altogether, these discourses build up the general image of a lack of music, or a poverty of music, that justifies the action carried out within favelas by different actors¹⁴ and, many times, that is assumed by the residents themselves, who end up unconsciously contributing to their own domination.

Final considerations

The idea of poverty being made up of multiple lacks, the lack of music being just one of them, and characterizing most discourses and actions directed to favelas is not new and is curiously akin to the multidimensional approach to poverty proposed by economists such as Amartya Sen. A significant difference between them, however, is that in the discourses accumulated on favelas, the perceived lacks are mainly defined from the “outside,” through socially constructed stereotypes and without taking into account the concrete experiences, wishes, and necessities of residents. Only residents’ direct participation in defining needs, lacks, and wills can lead to effective and democratic socio-economic development that is capable of challenging the lasting domination historically perpetuated over them.

On the other hand, one should be cautious about the results of using “culture as resource,” in the sense enunciated by Yúdice, which quite often is limited to an overflow of commodities of questionable sustainability as carriers of market value, thus hardly a way out of poverty or inequality in the long run. This is not something that can or should be judged morally, epistemologically, or politically by an academic authority, however, since this level of intervention is often more lethal than direct intervention in the decision-making processes of collectives and social bodies with which academics interact, reducing in one way or another the agency of their interlocutors in autonomously articulating their own initiatives themselves. One good example comes from the above-mentioned case of academic models, meaning conservatory-like curricula and methods that make *tabula rasa* of local musical knowledge, adopted in both public and NGO programmes for “the poor.” Our criticism above of the symbolic violence embedded in such examples, therefore, has to account for how ideologies of artistic hierarchies make their way through the disqualification of the music from the favelas, relatively disempowering local forms of resistance and eventually finding advocates among unsuspecting local leaderships.

The work that the Musicultura group has been carrying out represents a small but effective step towards challenging the forms of symbolic violence that we have discussed, since it is based on the systematic deconstruction of naturalized conceptions and discourses achieved through a dialogical process of knowledge

on the discourses and ideological positions around these musics, as well as an ethnographic account of how they are practiced and experienced in Maré, can be found in Cambria (2012).

14. It would be wrong, however, to attribute bad intentions to the people promoting cultural programmes in the favelas. On the contrary, they are most times well-intentioned and serious. The catch is that, as we have seen, one of the fundamental features of symbolic violence is exactly the fact that its mechanisms and processes are “misrecognized” even by those directly involved in their reproduction.

production. Once the “culture of silence” that oppressed people are caught in is broken, apparently simple questions usually answered with common-sense “truths” (such as, “what is samba?,” “what does funk music represent?,” “what is good music?,” or even, “what is music?”) began to acquire new meanings and answers. Musicultura members gradually became able to perceive more critically, and deal with, the social processes they are inserted in and the many contradictions characterizing them. Establishing an open-ended dialogic process within the course of an academic research career, however, may profoundly challenge the prevalent beliefs and doings of research institutions, demanding newer politico-epistemological foundations.

As not a few collaborative and engaged research experiences the world over have been demonstrating, it is an enormous challenge to develop a contrasting and more-democratic legacy that possibly contributes to substantially reduce if not eradicate perverse social equations, now seriously menacing the US-European axis of a worldview on immutable power relations. Anyone working in this direction should be humbly conscious that socio-economic and cultural processes, conditionings, and products are permanently mediated and re-signified by power relations, and demand constant action and reflection upon them, not allowing much space for static or reified theorizations,¹⁵ whose more palpable effects are the almost invariably ephemeral consecration of authorities, and tautological forms of stereotyping and oppression.

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15. For instance, texts that suggest in a reifying way the existence of a non-circumstantial relationship between samba and pacific coexistence in the favelas, as opposed to a similarly naturalized one between funk and an escalation of violence in the 1990s (see Zaluar 2009).

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Abstract in Portuguese

Amplamente analisado e debatido em áreas de estudo como economia, saúde, ou sociologia, o tema da pobreza aparentemente não teve um impacto significativo nas pesquisas acadêmicas sobre música, para além do reconhecimento implícito que ela pode ter condicionado de alguma maneira o fazer musical entre determinados grupos sociais, países ou regiões mais amplas do mundo. Este artigo discute perspectivas multidisciplinares, mas principalmente aquelas propostas por economistas no final do século XX, em relação à experiência de pesquisa de um grupo formado por pesquisadores acadêmicos e moradores de um conjunto de favelas no Brasil, no intuito de explorar empírica e teoricamente as maneiras em que pobreza, desigualdades e práxis sonora são reciprocamente implicadas para além de especulações de sentido comum.