The concept of musical cities and the development of the local creative economy

El concepto de ciudades musicales y el desarrollo de la economía creativa local

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Abstract

In this article, we intend to analyze the concept of “musical cities” by establishing a link between this concept and the presence of a network of agents of the production chain which provides a structure so that the musical market may promote the circulation of its services and products, and so it may assist in the generation of new business in the region; nurturing the sustainability of the segment. The proposed viewpoint presented herein is that “musical cities” do not develop without consolidation of a social and technical network (Latour, 2012) of connected agents.

Resumen

En el presente estudio se pretende incluir en la noción de “ciudades musicales” la importancia de la existencia de una red de agentes de la cadena productiva que proporcione una estructura para el mercado musical desarrollar la circulación de sus servicios y productos, generando negocios en la región y fomentando la sostenibilidad del sector. El argumento es que las “ciudades musicales” no se desarrollan sin al mismo tiempo consolidar una red socio-técnica (Latour, 2012) de agentes conectados.

Keywords

Musical Cities; Creative Economy; Niterói; Network

Palabras clave

Ciudades Musicales; Economía Creativa; Niterói; Redes

1. Introduction

This research study is closely tied to recent studies about the concepts of “musical cities” and “creative cities” that have been discussed over the last few years by researchers and by international organizations that address this issue as part of their activities, such as UNESCO. Indeed, since 2004, UNESCO has been putting together a network for the promotion of international cooperation between cities that recognize culture and creativity as being strategic factors in sustainable urban development.

For several decades, music has been considered one of Brazil’s most important cultural assets, being part of Brazilian national identity. Brazilian music brings rhythm, melodies and lyrics that give rise to sonorities that are well publicized, thereby generating a relevant market worth over 580 million Brazilian Reais (about EUR 150 million). Having a “dual nature” which characterizes music as merchandise and, at the same time, an expression that brings cultural identities, values and meanings (De Marchi, 2015), music is often approached from different viewpoints by several different fields of study. The proposed viewpoint presented herein is that “musical cities” do not develop without consolidation of a social and technical network of connected agents at the same time (Latour, 2012), and the opinion that this network should be considered for the launch of Government policies that encourage this segment.

2. Aims

In this article, we intend to analyze the concept of “musical cities” by establishing a link between this concept and the presence of a network of agents of the production chain which provides a structure so that the musical market may promote the circulation of its services and products, and also so it may assist in the generation of new business in the region; nurturing the sustainability of the segment and encouragement of the drawing up of Government policies that cater to the needs of these agents.

In view of this, this study is based on an empirical study considering the experience of the city of Niterói, a Brazilian city in the Greater Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Area, which has, in recent years, been developing and implementing Government policies aimed at the musical segment.

Therefore, this research study has the following core goals:

- To map the agents involved in the musical sector, in the city.
- To analyze the network that these agents have formed.
- To identify the main Government policies concerning the musical sector as developed in the city.
- To understand the role that these Government policies have played, and their effects upon this network of agents, for the development of the creative sector in this locality.

3. Methodology

In order to illustrate a scenario that leads us to understand the consequences of local policies upon the network of cultural agents of a “musical city”, the present article is based on: (a) a review of the bibliography addressing the issue; (b) a follow-up of the activities developed by the municipal administration between 2012 and 2017; and (c) the information contained in a database about the agents active in the musical sector in Niterói, as obtained during the execution of cartographic studies for the implementation of the “Musical Map of Rio de Janeiro”, that has identified over a thousand agents of the chain of music production within the state of Rio de Janeiro in the following segments: show venues, music courses, sound equipment, Government institutions, festivals, and popular festivities, shops selling musical instruments, studios for rehearsals and recording, and cultural groupings.

The Musical Map of Rio de Janeiro (Mapa Musical RJ) is a collaborative tool for mapping the actors active in the musical culture of the State of Rio de Janeiro, with the support of the locative media. For this, the project was based on the data that was gathered during a research study that was developed in partnership by the Ponte Plural group and LabCult (the Laboratory for Research in Urban Cultures and Communication Technologies) of the Fluminense Federal University (UFF), Niterói, Brazil.

The research started back in 2011, when the authors of the present study, and members of the group known as Ponte Plural, circulated around the interior of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, mapping cultural agents in some 60 cities. The following year, the cultural initiative brought out a first mapping of show venues and other cultural spaces of this municipality where musical presentations were staged. The number of hits of this data was very large indeed, and hence came forth the proposal to expand the
scope of this research study and consider the State of Rio de Janeiro once again, through use of the Musical Map of RJ, in partnership with LabCult.

Thus, during the execution thereof a new thorough study of the region was performed, to identify not only show venues and cultural spaces, but also other agents of the music production chain, whose information was included in an online platform that was made available free of charge to all those interested. This platform was launched in October 2015 and then included a tour for presentation of the tool throughout the backlands of Rio de Janeiro State, as also in other Brazilian States and in other countries.

The data obtained during this research study was summarized using the format: Type of Agent, Name of location, City, Address, Telephone, E-Mail, Site and Description. The sources used include a virtual monitoring of social networks; direct requests of cultural agents; as also through a form, which is made available online, as well as on-site observation during trips crisscrossing the interior of the State.

It is important to stress that the choice of development of cartography of the agents of the musical production chain, as a methodological tool for the present study, took into consideration the fact that this possibility would allow not only the meeting of the need for an initial stage of data collection for this study, and would also organize a relevant database to be used by the agents themselves within the musical sector, especially artists, in order to further nurture new business and circulation in the region. In addition, this is a platform that is undergoing a constant feedback process, in which the users may inform new items to be included, as also inform the closure of activities at points previously registered.

Based on this survey of agents, several analyses have been produced, in the light of the application of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 2012), to track controversies and to identify associative hybrid and heterogeneous social and technical networks, comprising human and non-human actors (Pereira de Sá, 2014).

Therefore, it is based on this detailed investigation throughout the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro that it has been possible to identify the relevance of a minimal structure of the musical production chains of the different municipalities and observe the existence of the circuits (Straw, 1991, 1997, 2006) and sonic-musical territorialities (Herschmann and Fernandes, 2014), that set up “sound landscapes” throughout the territorial expanse of the State.

Based on these analyses, we see that the city of Niterói stood out for two important aspects that led to this city being selected to be the object of this study. The first reason is related to the quantity and variety of agents of the musical sector that are based in this city. For example, while there are some cities that do not have any studios for rehearsals, or shops selling musical instruments, the fact is that Niterói has several. This means that Niterói not only has a network consisting of different categories of the agencies as mapped, but also has these present in significant numbers, generating competition and expanding the range of options available on the market.

Because of this, during this research of the Musical Map of RJ, the city was identified as a “Musical Hub”, as it stands out within its geographical region for the structure that has been supplied by these agents, and also caters to the needs of those residing in neighboring cities and towns, who no longer need to make their way to the State Capital (Rio de Janeiro), as they can go to Niterói to purchase a musical instrument, carry out a rehearsal, or record a song, for example.

The second reason refers to the diversity of Government policies as established in the city. It was possible to note that most Municipal Governments within the state of Rio de Janeiro only invest in measures connected with the teaching of music and democratization of access (which normally includes free shows of mainstream artists at public events like the commemoration of the anniversary of the foundation of the city). On the other hand, in Niterói there is also a focus centered on musical production and creation of an audience aimed at local artists, seeking to uphold the tradition that the city of Niterói has enjoyed, which is that of unearthing important talent on the Brazilian national music scene, with famous names like Zélia Duncan, Ithamara Koorax, Paulinho Guirara, Dalto, Marcos Sabino, Sérgio Chiavazzolli, Cláudio Infante, Marcelo Martins, Kiko Continentino and Arthur Maia.

After all, it is very common for Governments to be concerned about musical qualifications and hence provide actions aimed primarily at children and young adults, but other segments of this significant untapped market are not covered by Government policies. This means that the structure needed for the
music market to remain active is not complete, thereby having an adverse effect on the professionalization of this segment.

Another point is that the municipality this year brought out its new Culture Law, by which the cultural agents of the city may enter cultural projects to receive direct and indirect investment through funding of the Municipal Culture Fund and incentives through tax breaks offered to sponsor.

All these elements also raise questions about the relationship and the consequences of these Government policies with the network of these cultural agents as identified in this cartography and its impact on the local creative sector. For this, the present article shall take as its basic parameter three projects with different perspectives: Apprentice (teaching of music), Art in the Street (qualification of a public for artists based in the city) and Four Seasons Circuit (shows with famous artists, seeking entertainment and democratization of access to culture).

4. Results and Data Obtained

Over the last few years, there was the start of a process of transition of the valuing of the industrial to the creative segment, motivated by the dissemination of digital culture and the advent of new technologies, the expansion of communications between people, and the variation in economic structuring. Known as the post-industrial area, this is the phase of greater valuation of information and knowledge.

For the identification of this period, several different naming systems have been devised, each with its own peculiarities, such as, for example: The Knowledge Society (Crawford, 1004; Hargreaves, 2003), The Intelligence Society (Gorz, 2005), Information Society (Castells, 2003; Lévy, 1996; Machlup, 1962; and Drucker, 1966), and the Society of Learning (Pozo, 2004). The common element between these different concepts is the highlighting of a deterritorialized environment with a high degree of connection between people, with an intense flow of data and constant reconfiguration through technological advances; where one can confirm the relevance of the information and of new methods of access to knowledge. At this moment, the human mind started to be a direct productive force rather than just a decisive element in the production system (Castells, 2003:7).

Considering this panorama, the professional people in these Societies do not only need to amass knowledge, but must also be interested in continuing with the learning process. He or she also needs contacts, and the strengthening of networks that can be accessed for carrying out joint actions. In addition, he or she needs to not only have skill in learning and in adapting to the environment better than the competition (Johnson, 1998), but also the competence to lead the search for solutions and the development of new products and services.

In this environment, there was the unfoldment of an economy that leads to a rupture of the traditional industrialization processes, thereby generating a favorable environment for giving greater value to information, creativity and innovation, which has strengthened segments included in the Creative Economy, “in which the motor force is creativity, led by knowledge and supported by connectivity” (Santos-Duisenberg, 2005). In this sector, creativity is therefore the key element to generate intellectual property and thus transform it into economic value. In addition: creativity is a human asset, which cannot be replaced by automated work, and this gives the professional person even more value.

This is the business sector which includes the music industry. Here it is worth pointing out that the creative economy is a strategic segment for the economic development of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Per the Mapping of Creative Industry by the Federation of Industry of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FIRJAN), the state of Rio de Janeiro is the second Brazilian state in terms of the number of people employed by the culture sector (99 thousand – 2.2% of Rio de Janeiro has creativity as its main working tool), second only to São Paulo (328 mil). These states also concentrate the best paid workers in the culture business in Brazil.

Despite the general financial and political crisis, the creative area has shown itself to have been less affected by the adverse economic scenario between 2013 and 2015, compared to the Brazilian national economy; the participation of the estimated Creative GDP in the global Brazilian GDP has edged up from 2.56% to 2.64%. Thus, the creative area has raked in a total of R$ 155.6 billion (EUR 40.0 billion) for the Brazilian economy this last year.

Amidst this environment with the advent of the Information Society, the high flow of data and greater value of knowledge have had affected the music market in different ways. The process of globalization, which originated in the coming together of the world’s economy and in the appearance of new communication technologies, has allowed strong spread of information. This means that the advent of these new technological developments has helped to make the Internet more popular, and this, in turn, has helped to spread music files and encouraged the intense connection between people.
In addition, we have borne witness to the appearance of many sites which operate as databases for music files for downloading; and digital platforms which allow the listening of music via streaming, thereby expanding the access of the people to artists from all over the world, who are now just a click away, and allow one to reach out to new environments – and countries – for the establishment of a public and of remuneration.

This way, over the last few years the music market has been going through a continuous process of reconfiguration of their production media, publicity, distribution, circulation, and mainly consumption (Pereira de Sá, 2006; De Marchi, 2011; Herschmann, 2010).

Based on the repercussion caused by the development of such technologies, we could confirm a transition in the way the music market operates. The music market morphed from being a system based on the sale of phonographic records, centralized by big recording companies where artists would launch their albums which left as Golden Discs with millions of copies sold; now turning into a second type of model in which it has become necessary to seek new paths forward, to overcome these obstacles that may arise from these reconfigurations, and adapt to a new type of economy, which “comes forth from the inside of the old model, as a result of the Internet by companies for their own purposes, and in specific contexts”, as stated by Castells (1999:20).

In this regard, we have seen the start of discussions about the “crisis” in the phonographic industry within the music sector, at a time when the profits of recording companies were slashed, given that the volume of trading of physical media shrank. In addition, it was no longer an advantage to have many artists on their books, as it was no longer possible to invest as it had been in bygone days; and the number of contracts was substantially reduced. It was time to embark upon a restructuring plan.

Because of this, singers, musicians and agents of the music market have been developing new strategies for the sustainability of the market, but at the same time the Governments need to rethink their policies for the segment, to include this new moment that the market is now experiencing.

Faced with this scenario of reconfigurations within the music sector, Niterói City Hall has been carrying out a work project focused on 3 different types of demand: (1) teaching of music at schools, thereby nurturing the artistic skills through the Apprentice project (“Projeto Aprendiz”); b) Art in the Street (establishment of audiences for artists based in the city); and c) Four Seasons Circuit (shows with mainstream artists, seeking the provision of entertainment and also the democratization of access to culture).

In addition, it is also worth adding that, while many cities in the state of Rio de Janeiro do not have a specific secretariat for cultural activities, Niterói has an exclusive secretariat for this sector and is also home to the Niterói Arts Foundation (“Fundação de Artes de Niterói - FAN”), that is a mixed-ownership institution (“autarquia”) responsible for the management of the municipal public culture equipment.

The Apprentice Project is carried out through a partnership between the Municipal Secretariat for Culture/Niterói Art Foundation and the Municipal Secretariat for Education/Municipal Education Foundation of Niterói, to introduce music to students of Year 1 to Year 9 of the municipal school system. Since 2011, the Brazilian Institute for Musical Memory (IMMuB) has taken over the general management of it, and has been working under the supervision of the FAN in the management and production of the activities.

First set up in 2001, the Project started out at three municipal schools with a total of 270 pupils enrolled. Between 2011 and 2012, these figures rose to 11 schools and 1500 students. There has been further expansion of the project since 2013, starting to operate in 20 institutions. During those years of its existence, the Apprentice project has won over the interest of children and young adults, and currently caters to some 3000 students.

It is interesting to note that the main mission of the Apprentice project is that of expanding personal and professional expectations of the participants, and that the main aim is to expand the universe of arts, culture and citizenship of the students through the teaching of music. Its main activities are introductory lessons in music, choir singing, and practice in string, wind and percussion instruments. The lessons take place inside the schools, which makes access easier and encourages interest on the part of the student, thereby motivating the student’s interest in school itself, an interest strengthened through art. Here we add that this project is also in line with the terms of Law No. 11,769 of 2008, which establishes that the
teaching of music shall be mandatory in schools of basic education, which are the obligation of municipal governments.

This format of the Apprentice project is relevant, as it allows several students of these schools to have contact with artistic qualifications, and is also an important moment within the process of musical professionalization. This, because starting now when the student joins the orchestra, he or she receives a financial stipend which helps to meet logistics costs for rehearsals, lessons, concerts and other activities within the Project. This means that it is a first remuneration that these young people shall receive, thereby establishing a relationship that contributes to maturity and strengthens the musical production chain, with the generation of paid business within this sector.

The Art in the Street (“Arte na Rua”) project seeks to meet a long-standing demand made by the artists in the city, to create a proposal of continuous flow, for presentations in different parts of the city. This issue was the subject of a strong debate, both in meetings of the Municipal Culture Committee, as also in the respective Music Committee, where the members also asked for a project of this type.

This project is the brainchild of the Municipal Secretariat for Culture and the Niterói Art Foundation (FAN), and brings together a series of free events which go around different squares, public spaces and cultural equipment throughout the city, thereby bringing the artists closer to their public and helping to publicize local production and the corresponding formation of an audience.

The selection for these regular events is made through an invitation to Bid with continuous flow, with the following aims: a) nurture local production through encouragement of the creation of new cultural proposals by the artists of the city; b) rethink the occupation of land spaces through art, thereby encouraging a new way for the population to regard the appropriation of urban space; c) encourage the establishment of an audience for a range of different forms of art; d) help with the policy of transparency and democratization of access of artists and art producers to Government projects and financing; and e) establishment of a municipal bank for artists through accreditation.

Given that, with the creation of this circuit, the Government intends to motivate artistic activities based on the principle that the streets are free for use by cultural expressions, it is worth stressing that the “Arte na Rua” project meets the terms and criteria of the city’s Street Artist Law (Law No. 3017/2013), which establishes that: “cultural activities of Street Artists in open public spaces, including squares, amphitheaters, plazas, do not depend on prior authorization granted by the Municipal Organizations, provided the following criteria are met: (a) they must be free of charge for spectators, although spontaneous donations shall be permitted; (b) they must not interfere with the free flow of traffic; (c) they must allow the free passage and circulation of pedestrians, as also access to any public or private buildings or institutions; (d) they must not need a stage or any other structure needing prior installation at the site; (e) they must use a source of energy, to supply energy to sound equipment, with a maximum power of thirty (30) kVA; (f) the duration is no more than 4 hours, and the event finishes by 10 pm at the very latest; and, finally, (g) the event must not have any private sponsorship that could make the event be characterized as a marketing event, except in the case of projects that have the support of Municipal, State or Federal Laws of incentive to culture”.

It is also important to point out that the main criticism of artists in the city refer to the low cachet paid for the presentations, which, apart from being considered very low (R$ 750.00 or EUR 193.00 regardless of how many musicians are involved), take a long time to be paid (sometimes over 9 months) – and the structure made available for the show, which is considered as insufficient by some of the artists who take part in the project.

The Four Seasons (“Quatro Estações”) Circuit was a project first launched in 2016 by Niterói City Hall through the Municipal Secretariat for Culture and the Niterói Art Foundation, sponsored by the company Águas de Niterói. The idea of the project is to host a major event with each change in season of the year, for 15 thousand people and with the participation of famous artists on the music scene and opened by local musicians in important tourist spots of the city, such as the external area of the Popular Theatre, and São Francisco Beach.

The main aims of this circuit are: (a) to strengthen Niterói’s vocation for art and culture, particularly music; (b) show the cultural and tourist potential of the city of Niterói; and (c) promote the strengthening of cultural activities in Niterói. With an estimated public of 60,000 people in its cycle, this is a project for democratization of access to culture, and has a target public that consists of people from different ages and social strata, thus benefiting both the younger population, as also adults and the chronologically advantaged.

Another important consideration is that this year there was the enactment of Law No. 3182/2015, which, among public policies for the cultural area, sets out the creation of a Law for Incentive to Culture in the
Municipality, setting out tax incentives for individual people and corporations who carry out cultural projects. This tax break is a reduction of up to 20% of the value, related to Service Tax ("Imposto Sobre Serviços de Qualquer Natureza – ISSQN") and the rates ("Imposto Predial Territorial Urbano – IPTU"), in relation to the sum invested in this support, which may be made through a donation or through sponsorship of cultural projects that follow the terms of the Law.

The same law sets out the financing of cultural activities through the Municipal Fund for Culture, whose income may come through the Annual Budget Law, federal and state transfers, contributions of companies, or other legally incorporable forms as may be determined. The Fund may also support cultural initiatives from individual persons and corporations, through public selection, then distributing the funds equally, to help the five regions of the city. This law is currently awaiting its official regulation, so it may start to be applied.

5. Final Comments

As mentioned, this article is based on a case study which looks at the production, circulation and consumption of music in Niterói, an important city within the Greater Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Area, in Brazil, a city where the municipal government has been developing Government policies for the encouragement of this segment.

In view of this, the music sector was initially assigned as a segment within “Creative Economy”, a term which has been used over the last few decades to identify the products and services that have creativity and innovation as their origins. The Creative Industry is a strategic segment for the economic development of the State of Rio de Janeiro, mainly within a scenario of economic crisis. Indeed, the Creative Industry showed a higher rate of growth than other industrial segments.

As one can see from the points mentioned above, the Government has, over the last few years, sought to strengthen the local music scene, mainly through actions in areas such as the teaching of music, the democratization of access to music and establishment of audiences with tours of presentations scattered throughout the city. The estimate is that such actions have had an impact on some 80 thousand people in the last term of office.

Even though such activities, promoted by the Government, have collaborated to spread musical interest in the city, other Government policies are now starting to be called for. We must not forget the importance of this moment of reconfiguration of the phonographic industry, and the economic crisis in Brazil, to stress the importance of steering the Government’s view to other areas within this production chain, and the need to develop Government policies that favor other agents, thus keeping the flow of this musical market in the city.

During the survey of the Musical Map in RJ, with the analysis of data of all the municipalities of the state of Rio de Janeiro, we could see that many cities are concerned about musical qualifications and provide actions aimed primarily at children and young adults; however, other sectors of this market are not addressed by Government policy.

For this reason, it is important to stress that, for a city to have structure that can generate musical business, it is important that other participants in the musical production chain, including show venues, festivals, shops selling musical instruments, and sound companies, are also included in the specific projects for the development of the sector, thus helping their professionalization. Otherwise, these spaces could end up closing down, thereby bringing about instability in the flow of the productive chain of the local music industry.

By way of example, through the monitoring performed in preparation for this research study, we can see that the number of show venues in Niterói has recently plummeted: 10 such establishments closed. With this drop in the number of private venues for shows, the main spaces used for shows in the city are those under Government management (the Arts Centre of the Fluminense Federal University – UFF, the Municipal Theatre, and the Popular Theatre) or clubs (such as the “Praia Clube” in São Francisco and the Charitas Sailing Club). This reduction has had a direct impact on musical circulation, as the artists in the city and from outside do not have anywhere to play their instruments.
The other categories have not shown a significant reduction in the city over these last two years. Taking this aspect into account, we see an appropriate moment to expand the list of those who benefit from Government policies, so that artists who qualified through the existing projects could succeed in managing a sustainable career in the region.

6. Bibliographical References


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1 The city of Niterói has some 500 thousand people, and has the best Human Development Index (HDI) in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the seventh best in Brazil. In addition, Niterói is the second-best city in the country in terms of per capita income (with R$2,200.00 Brazilian Reais per head, which works out at EUR 566.13), which is well above the national average of R$793.00 per head or EUR 204.07.

2 It is also interesting to note that, among the items that have been identified as relevant within the Musical Map of RJ research study, to form a structure for the circulation and consumption of music, there is no mention of record shops or CD shops, which at one time were very important in the connection between the musical production and the end consumer. This happens because, with the reconfigurations of the Brazilian music industry, led by the dissemination of digital culture, the physical point of commercialization of such albums was significantly reduced, being replaced by virtual shops and platforms for download and audio streaming.

3 Available at https://goo.gl/UHXVcq. The MMRJ had the sponsorship of mobile operator Claro, the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, the State Secretariat for Culture, the Rio de Janeiro State Law for Incentives to Culture, the Brazilian Ministry for Culture, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Faperj), as well as support from the Claro Embratel Foundation.

4 Available at https://goo.gl/jncSFs.

5 Available at https://goo.gl/9BXSvL.

6 Other cities that were identified as “Musical Hubs” were the cities of Campos dos Goytacazes, Cabo Frio, Duque de Caxias, and Volta Redonda.

7 Gilberto Gil, Lenine, Geraldo Azevedo, Maria Rita, Caetano Veloso, Zé Ramalho and Léo Jaime.

8 Here it is worth mentioning the network logic as shown by Castells (2002), which makes interaction between people easier and has been constantly applied within a cultural scope, especially in the music sector, through the creation of networks.

9 Available at https://goo.gl/z32XMf.

10 Even though the Government tender includes several artistic genres, the focus of the actions thus performed has been the music segment.