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The Brazilian Utopian Imaginary in European Festive Practices

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ABSTRACT:

The Brazilian Utopian Imaginary in European Festival Practices

In this analysis of the Brazilian presence in festive practices in European cities as quotidian tactics that reveal the inventive capacity and utopian vision of the participating subjects, we reflect on Brazilian culture in its territorial dimension, within selected festive cultural practices. We focus specifically on the structuring of festival spaces, such as the *Samba-Festival* (Coburg – Germany), the *Lavage de Madeleine* (Paris – France) and the *Carnaval de La Grande Motte* (La Grande Motte – France). The notion of utopia supports our understanding of the Brazilian cultural imaginary presenting potentials of and for action, and conditions for the production of new types of awareness that are characteristically playful and transgressive, and which do not always belong to the logic of productivity, but to the logic of the imagination and sensibility.

Keywords: imaginary, culture, Brazil, festive practices, identity.

Initial Considerations

Far from being considered an easy theme to analyze, festivals and parties are presented in all of their complexity, inciting stimulating discussions about their possible meanings, before, during and after they occur; as well as the consequences for the different people involved, be they spectators, actors or organizers.

We consider the earliest studies regarding festivals/parties as social phenomena as coinciding with the formation of the Human Sciences themselves, particularly with the

¹ Grant recipient from CAPES - BEX 0663/15-8, Collaborator: Dominique Crozat. The reflections here are part of the Post-Doctoral research carried out at the Department of Geography at the *Université Paul Valéry* – Montpellier/France, laboratory ART-Dev, between August of 2015 and June of 2016. I would like to thank CAPES (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*) for the financial support and Dominique Crozat for the valuable discussions and intellectual exchange.

works of Marcel Mauss and Émile Durkheim. Moreover, the theoretical reference for festival/party studies was systematized by Caillois (1950) and Duvignaud (1974), concerned with the issue of a festive essence that is distinct and universal, particular to human beings, within a history conceived as utopian.

For Caillois and Duvignaud, the festival/party arises as a transitory social experiment lacking norms, which contributes to consolidate a utopian vision of an ideal and renewed society, in which joy, and total interaction with the human essence, structures a model of complete and adventurous life experiences.

In a previous publication (DOZENA, 2012), we highlighted the theme of festivals/parties as an interesting reflection on resistance practices concerning territories, such that these practices bring to light a set of geographic objects involved in counter-hegemonic social processes.

Updating these reflections, we find that in some European cities there is a demand for the right to a democracy that is both communal and festive, which enables the visibility and expression of some elements of Brazilian culture. Although these elements may even be disseminated, for the most part, stereotypically, they refer to a way of life for social groups, Brazilian or not, undergoing a process of reshaping culture and identity.

Thus, the objective of this article is to analyze the Brazilian cultural imaginary present in festive practices in some European cities – an imaginary that, being manifest through quotidian tactics, reveals the utopian and inventive capacity of its participants.

To achieve this objective we reflect specifically on the following cultural festival practices: the *Samba-Festival* (Coburg – Germany), the *Lavage de Madeleine* (Paris – France) and the *Carnaval de La Grande Motte* (La Grande Motte – France). Our reflections are based on data from the application of semi-structured interviews with the subjects involved (cultural producers, *Batucada* - Percussion Squad and Samba school directors, members of *Batucadas* - Percussion Squads, and Brazilian and French musicians). In the interviews, we explored some of the issues involved in this practice, filtering our gaze of this selected object of study from our point of view as observers and in a characteristically interpretive way, without the pretense of generalizing the assertions for all European countries.

These methodological resources (interviewing and mapping) were carried out, along with participatory observation, so that the information relevant to the research, opinions and daily routines of the participants were spontaneously revealed, and so that we could enter into the daily routines of the individuals, groups and festive practices studied.

The Brazilian Presence in European Festive Practices

*Minha gente era triste, amargurada
Inventou a batucada
Pra deixar de padecer
Salve o prazer!*

My people were sad, bitter too
Started a percussion crew
To end all their suffering
Hot ziggety for partying!²

Song: *Alegria*, 1937

Author: Durval Maia and Assis Valente

The allegory of the happiness of Brazilians can be verified in the country's musical repertoire, as in the example of *Alegria* – Happiness, by Durval Maia and Assis Valente (recorded in 1937). This sentiment, however, drastically contrasts the psycho-sphere of depression of a large part of the Brazilian population, evident at the time of the writing of this article, due to the supposed bankruptcy of the progressive model of the country's Federal Government, put in check with successive denunciations and corruption scandals. This fact was accompanied by the particular disillusionment of millions of Brazilians as to the convictions of the Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) concerning ethical values in politics, which had been adhered to for decades. This also put in check one of the greatest utopias in power, related to the progressive stance of the left in the country.

Considering the unpredictability of the current political and economic scene, one question becomes preeminent: does Stefan Zweig's utopian affirmation that Brazil is the country of the Future still hold sway, as well as his argument that "While Portugal [...]"

² Translator's note: all translations of works cited in this article are either from previously published English versions, in which case the references are indicated in a footnote, as is the norm for publications certified by Scielo or, where no previously published English version exists, the translations are my free translations from the Portuguese, or the original French and Spanish versions.

dreams of a great and irrevocable past, Brazil looks toward the future” (ZWEIG, 1941, p. 151).³

In this “Carnival of disillusion” supported by discourses around the systemic crisis instigated by political and economic unraveling, we notice during the period of Carnival in 2016, the discussion about the alienation of the Brazilian revelers who continued partying happily, despite the economic crisis, of which they were under attack.⁴

From our assertion and visual witnessing of the happiness of people who participate in carnivalesque parties, an idea emerges: that there still exists a motivating psychosphere grounded in festive utopian imaginaries, which hovers over all the prevailing negativity. And, in this sense, without a doubt, the carnivalesque period becomes one of the main moments in which this happiness becomes evident, delineating spontaneity faced with the seriousness of fatiguing and sad realities.

In dealing with festive carnivalesque practices, we hold that there is a constant search for a type of festive utopia in them, which is at the same time a conception of the world and an inordinate search for pleasure capable of acting as a vigorous alibi. Thus, carnivalesque parties unfold not only detouring from reason, but searching for a model of civilization that is uncivilized, and an ancestral happiness that is still conceivable.

Brazil was named *Utopialand* by Blaise Cendrars, as Freitas (1998) observes, fomenting the declared ideal of conquest of its lands by the Portuguese, upheld by the fictitious representation of the country, expressed in the letters of Pero Vaz de Caminha to King D. Manuel of Portugal.

According to Émery (2007) the allusion to Amerigo Vespucci’s travels in the work by Thomas More (1985) points out that “without the least doubt about the mental location,

³ ZWEIG, Stefan. *Brazil: Land of the Future*. NY: Viking Press, 1941.

⁴ One example is the report by Daniel Gallas for BBC Brasil, titled “*Festa na crise? As cidades que cancelaram o carnaval pelo Brasil*” – Party during crisis? The cities that canceled Carnival throughout Brazil: http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2016/02/160129_cabofrio_carnaval_pai_dg <Accessed in March, 2016>. Another example is the report by Roberto Mentha, titled “*Prefeituras de 46 cidades já cancelaram o carnaval para socorrer setores em crise*” City Halls of 46 cities that have already cancelled Carnival to aid sectors in crisis: <http://br.blastingnews.com/brasil/2016/01/prefeituras-de-46-cidades-ja-cancelaram-o-carnaval-para-socorrer-setores-em-crise-00749685.html> Accessed in March, 2016>We carried out a counterpoint to this argument in the interview: <http://cultura.fm.cmais.com.br/de-volta-para-casa/carnaval-transnacional> Accessed in March, 2016>.

which is the only relevant one, the island of Utopia is superimposed on the Brazilian continent” (ÉMERY, 2007, p. 2).⁵

The *panaméricas de áfricas utópicas terras brasileiras* – pan-americas of utopian Africas Brazilian lands – as the song *Sampa* by Caetano Veloso asserts, even today contributes to the creation of an image of a country that propagates a contagious happiness permeated with the rhythm of samba. French director, Marcel Camus, used this scenario in the film *Orfeu Negro* – Black Orpheus, 1959, which won the Oscar for best foreign film and the Palma de Ouro. It relied on this musical style to reinforce an exotic vision of Brazil as a tropical paradise.

Similarly, in my experience residing in France for one year, I encountered Brazilians who participate in organizing parties in cultural centers, schools, universities, public or private spaces, also finding a significant interest in Brazilian culture, along with a certain internationalization of its elements, above all those related to the festive practices.

It is a well-known that the spread of Brazilian culture, beyond the borders of Brazil, began with the musical phenomena of Carmen Miranda in the 1940s, when some aspects of the Brazilian identity were launched and associated to national characteristics (ORTIZ, 2006). The carnivalizing aspect of Brazil became disseminated in songs such as *Brasil Pandeiro* by Assis Valente, and in films such as *Esse mundo é um pandeiro* by Watson Macedo, revealing an exalting nationalism, synthesized by one of our interviewees:

Globalization gradually goes encompassing many things and samba enters well into this process. Samba has been promoted since the 1940s with Zé Carioca. All that was the beginning of a globalization, the song Tico Tico no Fubá sung by Carmen Miranda in a period of Americanization, everything related to a greater expansion of the notion of the universal. The use of the image of Brazil as a utopia began more or less then, with a positive perspective and a certain globalization. With regard to the musical aspects, there is an increased complexity in the level and quality, although the basic elements related to samba are held intact. In many European cities the Brazilian theme brought a response to the more negative elements, and this is what brought and still brings some people to invest in the music and become interested in Brazilian culture (Dudu,

⁵ In the Portuguese: “sem a menor dúvida para a localização mental, a única relevante, da ilha da Utopia em superposição com o continente brasileiro” (ÉMERY, 2007, p. 2).

director of the Aquarela Samba School, interviewed by Alessandro Dozena on 10/06/2015 – Paris – France).⁶

The approach to joy and pleasure in popular music and, with the attention highlighted on images of Brazil, solicits the definition of a utopia that references it imagetically. This pre-sensitization about the positive bias of the country involves elements related to carnival, soccer, music, capoeira, among others. Notably, within Brazil and abroad there is an ideal belief that the Brazilian cultural identity is permeated with festive practices and, as they are vigorous caricature type representations, they expand to reach populations from other countries that seek to internalize certain aspects of Brazilian culture.

In this way, the production of a sentiment of affinity or love for Brazil is generally found in some parties in European territory, together with specific symbols and representations that evidence something constituted as a product aimed at promoting a certain representation of the country that constructs and reinforces an internationalized Brazilian identity.

Photo 1 presents this representation, namely in the banner used – the national Brazilian flag, along with the visual image of a common element in street Carnival parades in Brazil: the *porta-bandeira* – Flag Bearer and the *mestre sala* – her escort, the Master of Ceremonies.⁷

⁶ In the Portuguese: A mundialização vai gradativamente englobando muitas coisas e o samba entra bem nesse processo. O samba é promovido desde os anos 1940 com o Zé Carioca. Tudo aquilo era o começo de uma mundialização, a música Tico-Tico no Fubá cantada por Carmem Miranda em um período de americanização, tudo relacionado à uma maior expansão da noção de universal. A utilização da imagem brasileira utópica começa mais ou menos aí, com uma positivação e uma certa mundialização. No que se refere aos aspectos musicais, há uma complexificação em seu nível de qualidade, embora continue guardando os elementos básicos relacionados ao samba. Em muitos países europeus a temática brasileira passou a trazer uma resposta aos elementos mais negativos, e isso é o que levou e ainda leva algumas pessoas a investirem na música e terem interesse pela cultura brasileira (Dudu, diretor da Escola de Samba Aquarela, entrevista realizada por Alessandro Dozena em 06/10/2015 na cidade de Paris - França).

⁷ The presence of the Flag Bearer and her escort, the Master of Ceremonies in the Brazilian Carnival parades originate in the colonial period when the enslaved africans sought to reproduce the aristocracy with the use of garb similar to those used by the nobility, in order to mock them (DOZENA, 2009). In the current Carnival parades, the couple is evaluated above all on their synchronicity and rapport, and by their care and courtesy of the Master of Ceremonies for the Flag Bearer; besides the zeal that both share for the banner, the symbol of the samba school.

Photo 1: *Carnaval de La Grande Motte* – France.



Photo credit: Alessandro Dozena, August, 2015.

Not only at this event but also in other European carnivalesque festivities, the representation of Brazilian culture emerges through the dissemination of cultural aspects based on fantasy, from the propagation of a divided intercultural ideology between Brazil and the other countries.⁸ Some of these allusions are fed by representations and metaphors adapted to the new spatial context of the foreign country, and what is projected on the individuals is the possibility of an identity choice that becomes multiple. In this specific theme, and with the focus on the musical influence, Crozat ruminates:

In contemporary approaches, identities are necessarily multiple, and thus we confront the first gap. In fact, music is presented as one of the main vectors of these essentialist formulas; we relate types of music to the territories, in which we imagine it impossible that their inhabitants have different tastes: in common discourse, a Congolese tenor is unimaginable, just as is a Brazilian punk-rocker. On the other hand, a samba interpreted

⁸ For example, these influences of the Brazilian Carnival model can be found in carnival festivals in France (Paris, Toulouse, Montpellier and Limoux), in Italy (where we served on the judges' panel in 2016 at the Carnival in Viareggio) and in Germany (in the Carnival of Colon).

by someone Japanese or Mongol rock makes us smile [...] The contemporary approaches emphasize a multiple identity and considers this multiplicity as a process of coherence of a capacity for individual projection in an identity that he or she chose for him or herself; it is then preferable and more precise to speak of a flexible identity [...] This identity concerns both the individuals, as well as the groups and places (Crozat, 2016, p. 50)⁹.

We know that in different regions throughout Brazil a multiplicity of cultural manifestations are produced. They reverberate in heterogeneous identification with these places and with particular social communities, and this diversity is an important characteristic in forming identity, even though they may be at times unacknowledged and even unknown in their own country, they attract the interest of foreigners and feed the foreign utopian imaginary.

This is the case of the Samba-Festival in the city of Coburg (Photo 2), where the main *Batucadas* (Percussion Squads) of various European countries gather, and where there are Capoeira, and Brazilian music and dance presentations. The dimensions of identity perceived are capable of serving as instruments of legitimization or affirmation of political territories, at the same time in which they integrate to a transnational imaginary geography, which has, in this case, the Brazilian culture as a driving force. These practices contribute to the dissemination of the territorial imaginary and symbols, activating and projecting a reality that is reinforced by images and imaginaries; in preconceived representations.¹⁰

⁹ In the original French: Dans les approches contemporaines, les identités sont nécessairement multiples et cela nous confronte au premier hiatus. En effet, la musique se révèle être un des grands vecteurs de ces formules essentialistes; on attache des types de musique à des territoires dans lesquels il est inimaginable que leurs habitants puissent avoir des goûts différents: dans le discours commun, un ténor congolais est inimaginable, de même qu'un punk brésilien. A l'inverse, une samba jouée par des japonais ou du rock mongol prêtent à sourire [...] Les approches contemporaines insistent sur une identité multiple et j'envisage cette multiplicité comme un processus de mise en cohérence d'une capacité de projection de l'individu dans une identité qu'il s'est choisie; il est donc plus précis de parler d'identité flexible [...] Cette identité concerne les individus, les groupes comme les lieux (Crozat, 2016, p. 50).

¹⁰ For more information, access: <http://www.samba-festival.de/> <Consulta realizada em 11/03/2016>.

Photo 2: Samba-Festival in Coburg - Germany.



Source: <http://www.samba-festival.de/festival-2016-en-gb/programm-en-gb/>
Accessed, March, 2016.

The Samba-Festival is the biggest samba party in Europe, and occurs annually in the months of July, as our interviewee explains:

This party brings together a good portion of the European *sambistas*; when it was created it gathered practically all of the samba schools and *Batucadas* (Percussion Squads) that exist in Europe, but there is currently a screening done due to the enormous quantity of European groups interested. The event unites the *Batucadas* and samba schools that are inspired by the *cariocas* (residents of Rio de Janeiro) and Brazilian rhythms. It is something impressive, the German organization manages to gather nearly two thousand people and the city becomes entirely taken over by samba, forming a true Samba City. It is the biggest samba party in the world, outside of Brazil, of course (Dudu, director of the Aquarela Samba School, interviewed by Alessandro Dozena on 10/06/2015 – Paris – France).¹¹

¹¹ In the original Portuguese: Essa festa reúne uma boa parcela dos sambistas europeus, quando foi criada reunia praticamente todas as escolas de samba e Batucadas que existiam na Europa, mas há atualmente uma triagem em decorrência da enorme quantidade de grupos europeus interessados. O evento reúne Batucadas e escolas de samba que se inspiram nas escolas de samba cariocas e nos ritmos brasileiros. É algo formidável, a organização alemã consegue reunir aproximadamente duas mil pessoas e a cidade fica toda encampada pelo

This verifies the current trend in the organization of European Festivals in urban contexts, capable of generating a stronger identity for the cities and converting these public and private events into tourist attractions. An example is Unesco's Chairs Program, which acts in this directions, recognizing cultural expression in distinct countries and valuing the tangible and intangible heritage. In this way, the strategy of promotion and dissemination of the Coburg festival acts within the same parameters articulated by Capel:

Many cities have dedicated themselves, with great effort, to reconstructing the image of the city, attempting to convert a negative image to a positive one, through publicity, design and advertisements. One essential aspect of this strategy is the accentuation of the idea of the service centers, with cultural and playful facilities of various types: Conference centers, cultural capital, art festivals, high-level sports competitions, Science and technology museums, parks and gardens. With all of this, the aim is not only to offer the best services to their residents, but also, above all, to attract foreign travelers who bring money into the city (Capel, 1996, p. 33)¹².

In the Samba-festival, the meeting of the *Batucadas* (Percussion Squads) originally from various European countries, certainly provokes a reciprocal influence from the confluence between distinct cultural origins. The *Batucadas* are groups of percussionists, comprised of 10 to 50 people on average, who occupy and traverse the city streets during European festive events. This musical phenomenon "goes hand-in-hand with the spread of playing Brazilian percussion throughout the world" (VALIANT, 2009, p.179) and in the case of France, it was a Brazilian woman who was responsible for this process:

With relation to the origin of the *Batucadas* in France, one person was fundamental: Nicia Ribas D'Ávila. She defended her doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne in 1987, on the semiotics of music. She had done the thesis in Brazil about the Padre Miguel samba school, specifically about the work

samba, conformando uma verdadeira Cidade do Samba. É a maior festa de samba no mundo, fora do Brasil é claro (Dudu, diretor da Escola de Samba Aquarela, entrevista realizada por Alessandro Dozena em 06/10/2015 na cidade de Paris - França).

¹² In the original Spanish: Muchas ciudades se han dedicado con gran fuerza a reconstruir la imagen de la ciudad, tratando de convertir una imagen negativa en otra positiva, a través de la propaganda, el diseño y la promoción. Un aspecto esencial de esa estrategia es acentuar la idea de centros terciarios, con equipamientos culturales y lúdicos de tipo diverso: centros de congresos, capitales culturales, festivales de arte, competiciones deportivas de alto nivel, museos de ciencia y tecnología, parques y jardines. A través de todo ello se intenta no sólo ofrecer mejores servicios a sus residentes, sino, sobre todo, atraer a viajeros exteriores que introduzcan dinero en la ciudad (Capel, 1996, p.33).

of Mestre André. Her thesis was that everybody could learn how to play samba in a *Batucada*. She did many samba workshops, while she was in France she created her own samba school, both to make a living as well as to illustrate her thesis, defending the fact that any gringo could play samba, from the subdivision of the samba rhythm in basic cells and on their different instruments. In these workshops she planted the seeds throughout all of France, Germany, Finland, England, Italy, Spain and other countries. She was a charismatic woman, whose charisma was contagious, becoming a guru of samba in Europe, something impressive. I met her at a workshop of the *Batucada na Casa do Brasil* – Percussion Squad at the Brazil House. She gave me an *agogô* to play. I liked it. I had never thought about playing in a *Batucada*. After that I joined her samba school (Dudu, director of the Aquarela Samba School, interviewed by Alessandro Dozena on 10/06/2015 – Paris – France).¹³

The scholar, Nícia Ribas D'Ávila, mentioned by the individual interviewed, received the title of doctor in Semiotic Language Sciences by the Nouvelle Sorbonne University, with the doctoral thesis entitled “A Semiotic Approach to the Brazilian Musical Reality of *Batucada*”. According to reports by the interviewees, she pioneered the introduction of samba played by the *Batucadas* in Europe, using the same musical instruments as the drum squads of the samba schools in Brazil, aiming to help develop the motor coordination of the participants in the *Batucadas*.¹⁴

Another festival in which images of Brazil are vigorously disseminated is held in Paris, and is known as the *Lavage de Madeline* (Photo 3). Clearly, this is a festival that is inspired by the washing of the steps of the churches in *Nosso Senhor do Bonfim* and *Santo Amaro da Purificação* in the state of Bahia.¹⁵ According to the Palmares Cultural

¹³ In the original Portuguese: Com relação à origem das *Batucadas* na França, uma pessoa foi fundamental: Nícia Ribas D'Ávila. Ela defendeu sua tese de doutorado na Sorbonne em 1987, sobre semiótica da música. Ela havia feito a tese no Brasil sobre a escola de samba Padre Miguel, especificamente sobre a paradinha do mestre André. A tese dela era a de que todo mundo podia aprender a tocar samba em uma *Batucada*. Ela fez muitos *workshops* de samba, no tempo em que esteve aqui na França ela criou a sua própria escola de samba, tanto para ganhar a vida quanto para ilustrar a tese dela, defendendo o fato de que qualquer gringo pode tocar samba, a partir da subdivisão do ritmo do samba em células básicas e em seus diferentes instrumentos. Nesses *workshops* ela foi plantando sementes por toda a França, pela Alemanha, pela Finlândia, pela Inglaterra, pela Itália, pela Espanha, entre outros países. Ela era uma mulher carismática e contagiante, tornando-se uma guru do samba na Europa, algo impressionante. Eu a conheci em um *workshop* de *Batucada na Casa do Brasil*, ela me deu um *agogô* para tocar, eu gostei, nunca tinha pensando em tocar em uma *Batucada*. Na sequência eu entrei na escola de samba dela (Dudu, diretor da Escola de Samba Aquarela, entrevista realizada por Alessandro Dozena em 06/10/2015 na cidade de Paris - França).

¹⁴ For more information access: <http://www.niciadavila.com.br/>

¹⁵ For more information consult: <http://lavagedelamadeleine.fr/> and watch the documentary “Lavagem do Bonfim da Bahia a Nova York” available in: <http://curtadoc.tv/curta/povosidentidade/lavagem-do-bonfim-da-bahia-a-nova-york/>

Foundation, the washing of the steps of the Bonfim¹⁶ church ritual harkens to the period in which the slaves were obliged to wash the temple for the festival celebrated on the second Sunday after the Day of Kings (January 6th).

Photo 3: *Lavage de Madeleine* festival in Paris – France



Source: <http://www.bahia-salvador.com/c/bahia/culture-musique-cinema/page/2/>
Accessed in March, 2016.

The *Lavage de Madeleine* takes place in the area surrounding the Madeleine church, having been transformed into a Brazilian cultural festival in Paris, begun in 2011, in the program “The route of the slave” by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (Unesco)¹⁷. The spread of Brazilian culture finds its way primarily through musical presentations, courses and stands for Brazilian cuisine. It began in 2001, through an initiative of the Bahian artist, Roberto Chaves, currently receiving support from the Mayor’s office of Paris, the Secretary of Tourism from the State of Bahia and the

¹⁶ The *Festa do Senhor do Bonfim* was given the status of Brazilian Cultural Heritage by the Institute of the Historical and Artistic Heritage (*Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* -- IPHAN) in 2013.

¹⁷ For more information access: <http://www.unesco.org/new/pt/brasil/>

National Foundation of Art (Funarte) – an entity linked to the Ministry of Culture (Minc). Its creator and organizer explains:

This party came about like something nobody could believe, first for being a Brazilian event that involved not only culture but also the Catholic religion and Candomblé. The party today is called the Lavage de Madeline Cultural Festival, having as its religious ritual the washing of the steps of the Madeleine church, its highest point. It is a Brazilian cultural festival: we have the mass of Our Lady of the Rosario of the Black men – an afro-religious mass sung by Brazilians who live here. We have three days of the Cultural Market Place with a stage that has 16 stands that attract tourism companies to sell travel packages, there is the food court and on the main stage there are Brazilian music shows. The festival has been running for 18 years, as it takes place on the month of returning to classes from summer break, in September, everyone is here and we can gather up to 40 thousand people. The party has even been added to the Official French Cultural Calendar (Roberto, founder of the *Lavage de Madeleine*, interview carried out by Alessandro Dozena on 06/10/2015 in the city of Paris - France).¹⁸

During the *Lavage de Madeleine*, every year, there is the presence of the *Batucada Batalá*. It's worth noting that there are various types of *Batucadas*, which vary according to the rhythms played and the degree of appropriation of the elements of Brazilian culture. In the case of *Batalá*, there is a specialized samba-reggae rhythm from Bahia¹⁹, since it was instituted by the Brazilian musician from Bahia, José Gilberto Gonçalves (Giba), originally in the city of Paris.

The motivation for the forming of the *Batucadas* occurs spontaneously in various European countries, as well as the attempt to reproduce rhythms similar to that occur in Brazil, as Vaillant mentions:

It is not dealing with playing the instrument, exclusively: the participants work collectively to reproduce the identical music, as faithfully as possible, even singing in Portuguese, plus the costumes, the dancers, even

¹⁸ In the original Portuguese: Essa festa aconteceu como algo que ninguém acreditava, primeiro por se tratar de um evento brasileiro que envolve não só a cultura como também a religião católica e o candomblé. A festa hoje se chama Festival Cultural Lavage de Madeleine, tendo no ritual religioso da lavagem das escadarias da igreja de Madeleine o seu ponto alto. É uma festa da cultura do Brasil, nós temos a missa de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos, uma missa afro-religiosa cantada por brasileiros que moram aqui. Nós temos três dias de Mercado Cultural com um palco armado com 16 estandes que atraem empresas de turismo para vender viagens, tem a parte gastronômica e no palco acontecem shows de música brasileira. A festa existe há 18 anos, como ela acontece no mês de volta às aulas em pleno verão, setembro, todos estão por aqui e conseguimos reunir por volta de 40 mil pessoas. A festa está inclusive inserida no calendário cultural oficial francês (Roberto, criador da festa Lavage de Madeleine, entrevista realizada por Alessandro Dozena em 06/10/2015 na cidade de Paris - França).

¹⁹ For more information access: <http://www.batalaparis.fr/>

the social organization of the samba school. This reproduction does not exclude composition, singing in French, and all of the innovations that preserve the “traditional” musical codes, although the musical creation remains a secondary phenomenon. The groups then specialize in a musical Family (samba, samba-reggae or maracatu) after they choose one or more Brazilian groups as models for their musical practice. This form of orthodox appropriation or brazilianist is in the minority in France, but more applicable in other countries such as England, Finland or Japan (Vaillant, 2009, p. 190)²⁰.

Beginning with the *Batucada Batalá*, Figure 1 shows its significant expansion in European countries (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, England, Greece, Austria) along with Angola, South Africa, the United States, Mexico, Guadalupe, Argentina and obviously, Brazil.

²⁰ In the original French : Il ne s’agit plus seulement de jouer: les participants travaillent collectivement à reproduire les musiques à l’identique, le plus fidèlement possible jusqu’aux chants en portugais, aux costumes, aux danseuses voire jusqu’à l’organisation sociale des écoles de samba. Cette reproduction n’exclut pas la composition, les chants en français, voire des innovations tout en conservant les codes musicaux « traditionnels », mais la création musicale reste un épiphénomène. Les groupes se spécialisent alors dans une famille musicale (samba, samba-reggae, maracatu) puis choisissent un ou plusieurs groupes brésiliens comme modèles de la pratique musicale. Cette forme d’appropriation orthodoxe, ou brésilianiste, est minoritaire en France, mais plus répandue dans d’autres pays comme par exemple l’Angleterre, la Finlande ou le Japon (Vaillant, 2009, p. 190).

Figure 1: Geographic distribution of the *Batucada Batalá*.



Source: <http://www.batalaparis.fr/>
Accessed on March 09, 2016.

This significant spread of the *Batucadas* abroad can be understood in the context of the process of the expansion of Brazilian rhythms. This expansion made it possible, having samba as the rhythmic base, for the percussion groups to multiply in various countries, as the founder of Batucada D'Arte Cabloca in Montpellier, elucidates:

Brazil is a country that sells, it is a party country, of samba, soccer, lovely, smiling people. There are groups of people discriminated against in Europe, but Brazilians are normally well received, and suffer very little discrimination. In general the Batucada consists of you picking the instruments of the samba school: base drum, agogô, tamborine, pandeira and play them as percussive instruments. Using the same instruments playing the same rhythms from the samba schools in Rio de Janeiro, for example. These instruments can also be used to play other Brazilian rhythms, such as samba-reaggae, afoxé and maracatu. That's how the Batucada goes, the use of Brazilian percussive instruments to play Brazilian rhythms. In my opinion, the Batucada indicates the evolutive appropriation of traditional Brazilian rhythms. (César, founder of the

Batucada D'Arte Cabloca - Montpellier, interview carried out by Alessandro Dozena em 06/10/2015 in the city of Montpellier - France).

Photo 4: *Batucada D'Arte Cabloca*, Montpellier – France.



Source: <http://www.artecabocla.sitew.fr/>
Accessed on 09/03/2016.

In Photo 4, we find the appropriation of elements of Brazilian culture and its legitimization maintained by the use of the official t-shirt of the National sports teams. We clearly perceive, in the *Batucadas* a certain anthropomorphic appropriation of aspects of Brazilian culture, which have also altered the European carnivalesque practices, in the measure that the presence of *Batucadas* is very common in the momesca manifestations:

At the same time, the Batucada was and was not part of Brazilian culture. I prefer to think that the batuque is Human Heritage. I think this happiness, this power that the Batucada generates is something sensational, and that everybody should practice. The French admire the capacity Brazilians have for reinvention, and adaptability. That is why they seek to learn and appropriate in their own way (Robert musician, interviewer, carried out by Alessandro Dozena on 06/10/2015, in the city of Montpellier - France).

The cultural crossings are part of the history of Brazil and the European continent, being marked by incorporations, unions, confluences, counter positions and mishaps. If throughout this history there were absorptions on the part of Brazil, this too affects many European countries that receive these influxes, to the point of inserting them in counter-hegemonic social practices in their own countries:

A big part of the musicians face investments in Brazilian music with something that goes against the most outdated, reactionary, racista, conservative ideas. They see this as a positive opening and political engagement. Normally the Batucadas are present in manifestations against reactionaries such as the Gay Pride and May 1st, all that involves progressive movements and for civil rights. It is common to find Batucadas invited, but even without being called, we go (laughter) ... these musical manifestations appear as a force against the outdated values of the right (Dudu, director of the Aquarela Samba school, interviewed by Alessandro Dozena on 06/10/2015 in the city of Paris - France).

This aspect of the subversion, added to the attraction that the Batucadas spark in many Europeans, from the execution of rhythms that provoke feelings of happiness and enthusiasm, reinforce the interest of many participants through the appropriation of the Brazilian rhythms. Particularly in the case of the French, Guillot considers that the Batucadas are a phenomenon of musical diffusion and appropriation based on either freer borrowings or on more orthodox transmissions:

In France, two tendencies mark the evolution of the Brazilian carnivalesque musical groups. Those that were in the majority for a long time and constituted in the borrowing of some characteristic elements (such as the instruments) associated to a great liberty in the adaptation of the musical repertoire. And the other, the minority (though greatly increasing in recent years), which is the fruit of a more orthodox behaviour and refers to the set of resources available about the Brazilian Carnival culture, transmitted and taught by structured associations (Guillot, 2009, p. 2002)²¹.

The experience of the members of the Batucadas in visiting Brazil to get to know up close and to study the rhythms of the samba schools of Rio de Janeiro, the samba-reggae

²¹ In the original French : En France, deux tendances ont marqué l'évolution des groupes de musique brésilienne carnavalesque. Celle qui fut majoritaire pendant longtemps a consisté en un emprunt de certains éléments caractéristiques (comme l'instrumentarium) associé à une grande liberté dans l'adaptation du répertoire musical. L'autre, minoritaire (mais en croissance forte ces dernières années), est le fruit d'un comportement plus orthodoxe et se réfère à l'ensemble des sources disponibles sur la culture carnavalesque brésilienne, transmises et enseignées par des associations structurées (Guillot, 2009, p. 202).

groups such as Olodum in Salvador, or even the maracatu groups such as the *Nação Estrela Brilhante* in Recife; it is something that increasingly gains momentum as originating from the rich Brazilian cultural well-spring:

Brazil, with its percussive songs, became a storehouse of music for a great number of Batucadas, a model of sociability, of partying and lively traditions. This representation of an idealized Brazilian culture nurtures in the participants, a latente critique of cultural practices in French or European territory, which has a lack of musical and festive (Vaillant, 2009, p. 192, tradução nossa).

Faced with the multiplication of the Batucadas and the local competition, the groups tend to play out games of distinction (with relation to musical and extra-musical planes) and to research marks of legitimacy. One of the most efficient resources of legitimacy is trip to the source, which is done by a number of growing Batucadas in the period just before the Brazilian Carnival. Various parameters determine the choice of the group's destination, among them: the predecessor of the founders, encounters with Brazilian musicians in France, and, more frequently, reserach of a particular repertoire. In fact, the sonorous landscape of the Batucada is comprised of three musical families that correspond to precise regions: samba, samba-reggae and maracatu, respectively associated with Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Recife (Vaillant, 2009, p. 181)²².

These travels to Brazil become important moments of cultural encounter with Brazilian musicians, besides constituting training trips. Without ignoring the fertile and secular musical and festive traditions in the European territory, the marks of legitimacy acquired in festive practices in the cities mentioned (highlighting Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Recife), act as a motivating element of the utopian vision and inventive capacity of the participating members of the European *Batucadas*.

²² In the original French: Le Brésil, avec ses musiques de percussions, est devenu pour un grand nombre de groupes de batucada un réservoir de musiques, un modèle de sociabilité, de fête et de traditions vivantes. Ces représentations d'une culture brésilienne idéalisée nourrissent alors chez les participants une critique latente des pratiques culturelles sur le territoire français ou européen, selon eux vide de traditions musicales et festives (Vaillant, 2009, p. 192).

Face à la multiplication des batucadas et à la concurrence locale, les groupes tendent à opérer des jeux de distinction (sur les plans musicaux ou extra-musicaux) et à rechercher des signes de légitimité. Une des sources de légitimité musicale les plus efficaces est le voyage d' « aller aux sources » qu'un nombre croissant de batucadas effectuent en période de carnaval brésilien. Plusieurs paramètres déterminent le choix de la destination du groupe: entre autres, les antécédents des formateurs, les rencontres avec des musiciens brésiliens en France et, le plus souvent, la recherche d'un répertoire particulier. En effet, le paysage sonore de la batucada est composé de trois grandes familles musicales auxquelles correspondent des régions précises: le samba, le samba-reggae et le maracatu sont respectivement associés à Rio de Janeiro, Salvador de Bahia et Recife (Vaillant, 2009, p. 181).

Final Considerations

The notion of utopia allows us to understand the Brazilian cultural imaginary, presenting a potential of and for action, and a condition for the production of a new type of awareness that is characteristically playful and transgressive – an awareness that does not always belong to the logic of productivity, but to the imagination and sensibility.

Popular culture presents ways of symbolically operating in life, and does not only represent something that already existed, supported by a quotidian experience that is schematic and repetitive (LEFEBVRE, 1991), although it is often coopted by some commercial activities, examples of which were previously characterized, which they intend to disseminate – a reinvented Brazilian culture in Europe. Having as a base, the repetition of the imagined Brazilian utopia in European festival practices, it reinforces our conviction that “the quotidian experience is much more than the unconscious flow of identical days. It is in the daily experience that the citizen finds him or herself faced with the pressures and surveillance; but in the repetition also can emerge the essence of the imaginary (CARLOS, 2007, p. 58).

As we consider the vitality of this imaginary, we find the configuration of counter-spaces inside the dominant social organization, both on the scale of quotidian relations and the broader scale, and at the same time we register a “play of counter-positions that can be divided and incentivized by a new spatial arrangement, spearheaded by a democratic base that allows the confrontations of identities, with the permanent blossoming of a freeing diversity” (HAESBAERT, 2006, p. 15).

In this dynamic of counter-positions and identity encounter, the festivals, while social and discursive practices, can emerge as a counter-finality, evidence of the effectiveness of “other forms of rationality, parallel rationalities, divergent and convergent at the same time” (SANTOS, 2002, p. 309).²³

For this, we believe that some festive practices are fertile for their artistic and innovative creations, such as the *Samba-Festival* in Coburg, the *Lavage de Madeleine* in Paris and the *Carnaval de La Grande Motte*. Although we must consider that the social

²³ In the original Portuguese: “cotidiano é muito mais que o inconsciente fluir de dias sempre iguais; é no cotidiano que o cidadão se encontra diante de coações e vigilância; mas na repetição também pode surgir a essência do imaginário” (SANTOS, 2002, p. 309).

practices and discourse aren't always maintained outside of the economic rationality (moreover if we consider, for example, the dynamic of the Brazilian musical shows in Europe and the carnivalesque parades dominated by the profit interests of cultural producers), we are convinced that the social practices and discourses that activate the Brazilian cultural imaginary have the potential do point to new ways of thinking and acting by Europeans, through a certain festive Brazilian landscape, orchestrated by a performative and discursive dimension, that makes possible new cultural encounters and exchanges on the European continent.

The *Batucadas* referred to here, can consist of locations of sociability where they express experiences that are uncompensated financially, based on an experience common to all, conforming itself at the same time a possibility of musical learning and development of sociability. The *Batucadas* are something conceived particularly outside of Brazil (in the format that they exist in Europe), recruiting people interested in playing percussion instruments, without the need of having had professional training or even prior musical experience.

As we see, the *Batucadas* are present in popular festivals and seek to operate their social exchanges to subvert the modeling of the dominant subjectivity, producing spontaneous festive practices. One of the components of this spontaneity is expressed in the Brazilian rhythms played: samba-reggae, maracatu and rhythms from the carioca samba schools.

Ultimately, even if it is a new and complex phenomenon, the influence of the utopian Brazilian imaginary in European festive practices has generated alternative models of parties, distinguished by reterritorialized cultural practices that are orchestrated by democratic utopias that tolerate the play of identities, and are motivated by the long lasting and irreversible expansion of a transnational cultural diversity.

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