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"Music and Interculturality"

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Communities of Musical Practice: Transformative Contexts for Intercultural Communication

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Abstract

This article discusses the potentials of communities of musical practice as vital contexts for intercultural communication in a variety of ways. The focus is on two specific musical communities, one in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the other in Örebro, Sweden. The two communities are so called extension projects with one foot in the academic context and the other in the vibrant life of the cities. Both projects have an inclusive approach, where musical and social interaction serve as a means for musical development. The article discusses the concept of *communities of practice* as the organizational basis for collective musical activities and also the process of *musicking* as a way of describing the actual "doing" of music in the communities. Finally, intercultural experiences are considered when the article concludes with a discussion on transformative aspects of musical practices.

Keywords: Communities of musical practice, *Escola Portátil*, *Spelrum*, musicking, intercultural experiences, transformative practices



Las comunidades de práctica musical como contextos transformativos de las comunicaciones interculturales

Resumen

Este artículo discute el potencial de las comunidades de práctica musical, entendidas éstas como contextos vitales para desarrollar la comunicación intercultural en diversos ámbitos. La atención se centra en dos comunidades musicales específicas, una asentada en la ciudad de Río de Janeiro, Brasil y otra en Örebro, en Suecia, ambas creadas como proyectos de extensión universitaria, con un pie en el contexto académico y otro en la vida vibrante de las ciudades. Ambos proyectos tienen un enfoque integral, donde la interacción musical y social sirven como medio para el desarrollo musical. El artículo discute el concepto de *communities of practice* como base organizacional para llevar adelante actividades musicales colectivas y también el concepto de *musicking*, como una manera de describir el "hacer" real de la música en las comunidades. Finalmente, a través de un breve análisis intercultural y comparativo entre los dos proyectos, el artículo concluye con una discusión sobre los aspectos transformativos de las prácticas musicales.

Palabras clave: comunidades de práctica musical, *Escola Portátil*, *Spelrum*, *musicking*, experiencias interculturales, prácticas transformativas

Comunidades de prática musical como contextos transformativos de comunicações interculturais

Resumo

Este artigo discute os potenciais de práticas musicais comunitárias como contextos vitais para comunicação intercultural em diversos âmbitos. Tem como foco duas comunidades musicais específicas, uma na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil e outra em Örebro, na Suécia, ambas criadas como projetos de extensão universitários, tendo um pé no contexto acadêmico e outro na vida vibrante das cidades. Ambos os projetos têm uma abordagem inclusiva, onde interação musical e social servem como meio para o desenvolvimento musical. O artigo discute o conceito de *communities of practice* como base organizacional para atividades musicais coletivas e também o processo de *musicking* como uma maneira de descrever o "fazer" real da música nas comunidades. Finalmente, através de uma breve análise intercultural e comparativa entre os dois projetos, o artigo conclui com uma discussão sobre aspectos transformativos das práticas musicais.

Palavras-chave: práticas musicais comunitárias, *Escola Portátil*, *Spelrum*, *musicking*,

experiências interculturais, práticas transformativas

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Introduction

The authors first met on a Saturday morning in May 2015 at UNIRIO¹ in Rio de Janeiro. It was one of Marias's first visits to Rio de Janeiro as part of an international education and research project that she was coordinating. Rio-based Pedro was, as usual, spending his Saturday mornings at *Escola Portátil*, as one of the organizers and musicians in this extension project. *Escola Portátil* had been described to Maria as being a gigantic "Saturday music school", where people from all over Rio de Janeiro came to learn and play *choro* music, and she was eager to learn more about the project. Upon entering UNIRIO gardens, Maria was immediately struck by the soundscape and interactions of musicians of different ages and in various stages of their musicianship.

***Escola Portátil* in Rio de Janeiro – From a small workshop to a significant extension activity**

Choro was first developed as an urban popular music style in the end of the 19th century and it was usually performed in a "roda" (circle) in the bars and pubs of Rio de Janeiro. It is often described as the result of popular musicians' interpretations of European ballroom dances (polkas, waltzes, mazurkas and schottische) mixed with the influences of African dances. During the 1930s, the recording industry quickly took hold of *choro* and it became –just like *samba*– a symbol of "national music" (Aragão 2014). Despite its great popularity during this period, *choro* music never became integrated in the formal musical academic field, such as universities and conservatoires. During the 1950s and 1960, however, the popularity of *choro* declined, largely due to the rise of other Brazilian musical genres (such as *bossa-nova*) and foreign genres, like *bolero* and *rock*. In the 1990's there was a revival of *choro* music in Rio and the musicians aimed to involve people from various parts of the city and of different ages and social backgrounds. It first started as an educational initiative by some of the professional musicians who were linked to the *choro* music scene in Rio de Janeiro. This initiative was based on the fact that the urban musical genres developed in Rio had been excluded from the formal music education field, such as the universities and the conservatoires. Due to the fact that since the majority of the *choro* musicians did not have a university degree, they felt they were prevented from transmitting their particular musical knowledge in regular teaching institutions. Many of the musicians had strong historical connections to the *choro* tradition as they had been taught by the generation before them. A group of musicians (including cavaquinho player Luciana Rabello and guitarist Mauricio Carrilho) started an educational workshop on *choro* focused on young people and sponsored by the National Art Foundation (FUNARTE). A specific feature of this activity was that instrumental classes were offered, which were otherwise not accessible in regular music institutions particularly not at university level. The focus was on popular music and included mandolin, *pandeiro* and cavaquinho as well as more conventional instruments such

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as the flute and the guitar. *Choro* is always taught in the “roda”, a circle, in which the more experienced musicians pass on their knowledge to the younger ones.

The workshop started in 2000 and had about 30 participants. The number quickly increased, so that in 2001, the *choro* workshop had to find new premises, and hence, became an extension activity of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. In 2005, the project received financial support from PETROBRAS, a Brazilian oil company that has played a major role in financially supporting the national culture scene, and by then it was named *Escola Portátil*, a name derived from the intention to take the workshop to reach out to other locations around the centre of Rio de Janeiro. Today, *Escola Portátil* is an established possibility for learning popular music, which attracts about 1200 students annually. The project runs every Saturday morning with musicians from all parts of the city taking part.

Escola Portátil is organized around different instrumental classes, such as guitar, cavaquinho, tambourine, drums, flute, clarinet saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, choral singing, harmony, and ear training with teachers who are active *choro* musicians. Today, some of the teachers have academic backgrounds, but most of them are primarily virtuosos within their genre, without any academic training. The instrumental classes take place inside the university building and outside in the university gardens. These classes consist of groups of five to fifteen, depending on the instruments.

The teaching approach is that students will collectively learn by ear and through imitation, and the more advanced students will help the new ones. In addition to the instrumental classes at *Escola Portátil*, “roda de choro” is also offered. This allows students to join a kind of “choro jam” in their free time between classes, and it is organized and led by the more advanced students in order to encourage the beginners. After a morning of instrumental classes and “roda de choro”, the Saturday mornings at *Escola Portátil* finish at midday with the *Bandão*, a huge collective concert where all the musicians, students as well as teachers, perform together at the outdoor stage in the UNIRIO gardens.

***Spelrum*: Intercultural experiences and transformation of knowledge into a new context**

After the first meeting between Maria and Pedro at *Escola Portátil*, Maria returned to Rio de Janeiro later the same year with a group of musicians and teachers from her university in Sweden. One of the participants was Simon Bovin Schierup, a teacher in music theory, arrangement, composition and world music who also works as a freelance musician. One of his main interests is how cultural diversity and music education could become a vital part of the local community. The Swedish group visited *Escola Portátil*, and these experiences inspired Simon to transform some of the ideas behind the formation of *Escola Portátil*, to an inclusive musical project in Sweden; *Spelrum* (an ambiguous reference to *play* and *space*), that would address some of the challenges and aspirations of his local community in Sweden.

The cultural experience that the Swedish musicians and teachers had at *Escola Portátil* enabled them to transform their impressions into new forms of ideas and knowledge in their familiar contexts. This process could be described as:

[t]he act of putting oneself in dialogue with both the familiar and the unknown, setting one's

assumptions at play in order to open up to something different, giving a new view of what was before familiar. Through these personal and social experiences, practical-ethical wisdom can be developed, providing a basis for individuals to think and act in new ways (Burton, Westvall and Karlsson 2013: 97).

Sweden today is a society with a diversity of people, languages, religions and ethnic groups. Integration of minority groups into society is an important political intention, nevertheless the public cultural institutions tend to concentrate on the preferences of the majority group (Pripp 2006). A consequence of this is the structural exclusion of immigrants and diverse cultural expressions within the cultural sector. Another consequence is that musicians and performers with immigrant backgrounds might find it hard to be included in musical networks, professional as well as on a more social level (Carson and Westvall 2016, Pripp 2006).

When Simon returned to Sweden, he was inspired by the forms and methods of *Escola Portátil* and he wanted to investigate how democracy and intercultural dialogue could be explored and applied through musical performances, particularly within higher music education. As part of a research investigation, he arranged what he defines as “intercultural music meetings” between musicians and music students with different cultural backgrounds. Practical musicianship was mixed with discussions about music, musical experiences and the surrounding cultural context of music. The study revealed examples of how intercultural “music exchanges” (i.e. repertoire associated with the participants’ cultural backgrounds) provided good opportunities for increased intercultural understanding, but also consolidated stereotypes of “the others” (Bovin Schierup 2016). This investigation provided opportunities for networking and the next step was to form the local project *Spelrum* that aimed at a “music and art-interested audience”, and would serve as a path to “broadening social networking for both newly arrived and already established Swedes”. *Spelrum* was formed in 2017 as a cooperation between the municipality culture school and the university, with the aim of becoming a “meeting place for musicians, dancers and artists, where guest teachers with different cultural experiences would give workshops in instruments, singing, dance, visual arts” (Örebro kommun 2018). The classes are held centrally in the municipality culture school.

Communities of practice: Shared interest, shared knowledge

In order to understand the organizational basis for collective musical activities, the concept of *community of practice* can be useful. It has been developed to emphasize how learning, action and identity are closely linked in many collective contexts (Snyder and Briggs 2003, Wenger 1998).

A community of practice is a group of people that engages in a common activity or endeavor and it consists of three parts: a domain or a knowledge area, a practice (the activity) and a community (the participants) (Wenger and Trayner 2015, Lidskog, Pripp and Westvall 2018). In a community of practice, knowledge is developed, e.g. something that the members would like to “know”, as in this case, music. The community serves as a learning environment where the participants can meet and share ideas, solve problems, learn from each other and develop skills together. They also develop relationships and identities, being a part of the

community. The communities of practice are often informal, e.g., they do not have traditional organizational characteristics such as formal membership. Participation in a community of practice is voluntary and an important driving force for being part of a certain community is to maintain and develop knowledge in a certain field.

A community of practice does not have to be a formal organization, but it is a meaningful context where people meet, interact and influence each other. In other words, it can be a context for horizontal learning. Communities of practices occur because its members want to maintain or develop knowledge in a certain area. By doing that together, it becomes meaningful and important for the participants. It is a context in which experiences, skills and common values are developed and shared. Hence, a community of practice provides a certain sense of belonging and fellowship with others. The practice (the activity) of the community is linked to relationships and contexts and not only to the learning of certain skills and techniques. Most people are part of a variety of different communities of practice, and therefore acquire a sense of belonging in numerous contexts. People can go in and out of communities of practice, which means that some communities and the practices can change or cease, while new ones develop.

Communities of musical practice are social groups in which the members are connected through music. However, these communities may be formed by various main reasons such as, for instance, descent, dissent, or affinity (Shelemay 2011). These three examples do not need to be separate entities, yet they can exist in different constellations where descent, dissent and affiliation can be combined (ibid. 2011). A community of musical practice is a form of practice where the activities (performing, dancing or listening) relate to the knowledge area (music), which unites the participants (the community). Music, being an expressive cultural form, provides specific conditions for a community of practice (Ronström 1992; Lundberg and Ternhag 1996; Lidskog, Pripp and Westvall 2018) and communities of musical practice constitute a special type of practitioners, namely musicians.

How could we apply the concept of *community of practice* to the two projects *Escola Portátil* and *Spelrum*? As pointed out by Wenger and Trayner (2015), not everything that is defined as a community can be considered to be a *community of practice*. According to the authors, there are three crucial characteristics that define the concept: the *domain*, the *community* and the *practice*. The domain is essentially represented by the identity factors that are in the core of the membership in the practice, and each community of practice has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. In this way, membership “implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people” (Wenger and Trayner 2015). Applied to *Escola Portátil* this identity factor is represented by the interest in *choro* music, with a strong emphasis on the *choro* practice. Playing *choro* together, in the classes or in the *rodas*, is the main goal of the students who are in different ages, come from different social backgrounds and have various musical skills. The “shared competence” here is understood not as a distinguished musical ability or a high-level technical proficiency on an instrument. Instead, as a collective interest in learning *choro* skills such as the repertoire, characteristic musical phrasing, different styles of “*levadas*” (rhythmic and harmonic basis provided by *cavaquinhos* and guitars), among others. In the case of the project *Spelrum* the domain is a

common interest in performing versatile musical styles in an inclusive context. The practice –or shared competence– consists of a vast repertoire of music and genres from all around the world, ranging from traditional music to more global, contemporary genres and the musicians play instruments that originate from various musical cultures. Similar to *Escola Portátil*, the participants (the community) are of different ages, have various musical skills and they also have different social and ethnic backgrounds.

The *community* is the second main characteristic of the concept *community of practice*. According to Wenger and Treiner (2015), “in pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information”. In the *Escola Portátil* context, the community is not only defined by the group of hundreds of students that come to UNIRIO every Saturday. The main point to highlight here is the fact that the community’s members learn from, and together with, each other, but not necessarily through hierarchical and “traditional” teacher-student knowledge transfer. Activities like “roda de choro” (choro jams) and *Bandão* –a huge collective performance with students and teachers playing together in the university gardens– are examples of these processes. In both cases, students are learning with others, either in *visual* or in *acoustic* ways. For instance, observing and “copying” guitar chord positions from co-musicians; trying to imitate the musical phrasing of a wind instrument; attempting to synchronize the beats of his/her *pandeiro* with the others; paying attention to the bodily movement of the soloist in the *roda*, expressing the *swing* that s/he is conveying from other instruments, etc. Beyond the traditional teacher-student classes, the process of collective learning constitutes the core of the community in this context. In *Spelrum*, the intercultural aspects are vital and become an integrated part of the community’s identity and in the way in which music is practiced. Abdallah-Pretceille (2006: 480) describes an intercultural approach like this: “Cultural practices, attitudes and behaviors are [therefore] approached through a subjective personal experience, as a symptom in the relationship between the individual and the environment”. In *Spelrum* there is a flexibility in the way in which music is taught, learnt and performed, depending on the repertoire, on the persons who pass on their knowledge and on the persons who interact in the musical situations. The community seem to learn collectively on how to grasp this diversity of ways of learning and performing music.

Finally, *practice* is the third aspect that obviously defines a community of practice. *Amateur* groups such as wine *connoisseurs* and classical music lovers, do not *per se* constitute communities of practice. “Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems –in short a shared practice” (Wenger and Treiner 2015). In the *Escola Portátil* context the *practice* involves not only the musical activities offered each Saturday, like the choro “jam”, collective classes, *Bandão*. In fact, the Saturday meetings initiate a series of other activities that are frequently done outside the university –in other contexts and days of the week. For instance, lots of “grupos de choro” (choro ensembles) are formed among *Escola Portátil* students, and they perform in different cultural contexts in Rio de Janeiro as part of the city’s public cultural calendar. One example is “Chorinho da São Salvador”, a *roda de choro* organized by *Escola Portátil*’s students. It is held every Sunday mornings in São Salvador square –an event that is

already incorporated in tour guides and tour websites like *TripAdvisor*. In the context of *Spelrum*, the practice has rapidly started to take part of public performances in the city, such as festivals, school performances and flash mobs, celebrating diversity.

Musicking as the practice

The practice referred to above can be defined as *musicking*. Small (1998) first coined the concept of *musicking* as a way to describe the practice, or the actual “doing” of music. He defines *musicking* or “to music” like this:

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing (Small 1998: 9).

Froehlich (2007) refers to Small’s definition of *musicking*/to music, and further emphasizes *musicking* as a purposeful social act of music-making, in which both performers and listeners are equally involved. Elliott (1995) stresses the actual performing part of ‘to music’, e.g. playing instruments and singing, and equates this to *musicing* (Elliott’s spelling) whereas Lilliestam (2006) refers to *musicking* as a social and cultural act, and suggests an even broader definition of the concept. He suggests that *musicking* encompasses all activities in which music is incorporated, and exemplifies these as “listening, singing, playing, composing, improvising, dancing, talking about music, reading about music, collecting music(s), constantly “having music on one’s mind” or remembering music within oneself (translation from Lilliestam 2006: 24)”.

Musicking works as an investigative tool and encompasses all activities in which music is incorporated. It can be described as the social and cultural act that entails a participatory form of musical interaction that operates within relationships between people, sounds, (bodily) movement and space (Small 1998; Odendaal et al. 2014). The meaning of music-making arises in this interaction through the contribution and sharing of those who participate in a musical act. It can be a social activity that mirrors cultural customs and it is also about expressing, exploring and developing identity and affiliation with others (Lidskog, Pripp and Westvall 2018).

Given its amplitude, the concept of *musicking* could be applied to the *Escola Portátil* context in many ways, but we would like to focus on the *performative* aspects. As Small states: “performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform” (Small 1998: 8). This statement clearly inverts the idea, historically consolidated during the romantic period, of a “work-based [musical] practice, centred on the belief that musical works were perfectly formed, finished and ‘untouchable’ and transcended any particular performance” (Born 2005: 8). Like many African-American popular musical genres, the *choro* repertoire can be understood as a group of “open” musical pieces, hardly reducible to scores formats. Usually, scores are taken just as a general guide to the performers, since most crucial musical aspects –“levadas” (rhythmic-harmonic conduction by guitars and *cavaquinhos*), counterpoints, improvisations– are not written. In this sense, *rodas de choro* (choro jams) and *Bandão* practices are conceived as spaces of experimentation, where musicians are at the same time teaching and learning new music aspects.

Usually performed in the UNIRIO gardens, both *rodas de choro* and *Bandão* attract a general public –couples with babies and children, seniors, general *choro* lovers, foreigners interested in Brazilian music– seduced not only by music, but also by the environment (UNIRIO *campus* is located in Urca, just near to *Sugar Loaf*, one of the most beautiful post-cards settings of Rio de Janeiro). Despite the existence of an outdoor stage in the garden, most frequently “audience” and “musicians” are mixed up, with no formal separation between them. People interact in many ways: dancing, clapping hands, talking about the music that is being played, singing, etc. In this sense, just as stated by Small, each performance is considered as unique, once the focus is not merely the presentation of a “music-work”. On the contrary, the work of music is the result of each specific performance –and each specific performance is the result of the interaction between musicians and audience at the very moment of the musical encounter. In the case of *Spelrum* we can notice a similar approach. Even if the Saturday meetings take place inside the municipality culture school, the group of performers are often extended by the participants of the other activities in *Spelrum*, or by friends and family who are passing by. Especially after the mandatory coffee break, everybody can join in and listen, dance, film or sing along, when the musicians end up the meeting with a minor *bandão*. When a new musical piece is introduced during a rehearsal, it is often put into context by the musician who has brought the piece, sometimes by a written musical arrangement followed by questions and musical suggestions by the others. There is a strong emphasis on learning from each other, as a way of putting an intercultural dialogue and shared participation into practice.

***Escola Portátil* and *Spelrum*: Intercultural aspects of communities of musical practice**

In this dossier, ethnologist Oscar Pripp (2019) expresses that intercultural situations including cultural transmission “have to be understood as complex and unpredictable”. *Escola Portátil* is a community of musical practice that, in various ways, entails intercultural situations. The *knowledge area* or *domain* is *choro* which was traditionally taught, learnt and performed in the bars and pubs of Rio de Janeiro. By “bringing” the teaching, learning and performance of this musical style to a “new” space, such as the one of the gardens of UNIRIO, new encounters between people are made possible and new musical *practices* are formed. A new context provides a musical space for people with various backgrounds including age, social and economic circumstances, ethnicity, musical experiences etc. to engage in a musical *practice* that traditionally has been restricted to a specific space and context (the pubs and bars of Rio de Janeiro). *Escola Portátil* is open for all those who enjoy *choro* music regardless of academic background or musical networks. The “old”, skilled musicians who are part of the traditional *choro* scene, take on new roles as educators there, and the way in which they interact with their students and fellow musicians changes slightly in this context from the more traditional ones in the city. The students might be younger or older than they are used to, they might speak another language, the stage is different and the way in which the instrumental classes are organized is closer to how music is taught in more institutional settings. The classes take place within a certain timeframe and various approaches for the teaching and learning are applied within this practice. However, the way *choro* is taught is also based on the transmission of traditions from

the pubs and the bars from which the “roda de choro” originates. Intercultural experiences may change people and the way they act, think and relate to each other. The community of musical practice *Escola Portátil*, revolves around the *knowledge area* or domain of *choro*, but the tradition develops into a *practice* with intercultural aspects in where the community of musicians— old and young, beginners and experienced, performers and academics— interact and collectively create new knowledge and aspects of the teaching, learning, composing and performing of *choro* music.

A year after the project *Spelrum* was launched, we met Simon to discuss the connection between *Spelrum* and *Escola Portátil*, something that we have heard him mention on a few occasions. Simon talked about the *flexibility* of *Escola Portátil* as a key factor. The impression he had from *Escola Portátil* was that everyone was welcome to participate regardless of age and previous experience, and that the project was adjusted to the local prerequisites. The participants (the community) could differ, but the practice (*musicking*) is maintained due to a strong foundation in the domain (choro music) or in a deliberate versatile repertoire, such as in the case of *Spelrum*. *Escola Portátil* was formed due to the reason that the *choro* tradition was slowly losing ground in Brazil. It created a possibility of both maintaining and developing a local genre by finding a new space and new methodologies for the learning and performance of *choro* as well as reaching out to new groups of students. In the case of *Spelrum*, the local prerequisites are different. For this community, inclusive (musical) practices seem to be a necessity for two reasons. First, with the intention to avoid cultural and social exclusion of citizens with minority backgrounds and secondly to offer a greater musical resourcefulness to the community as a whole. An important similarity between the two projects is that the musicians who are teaching in the projects often have a vast professional experience but lack university education. This is often true for the musicians who teach folk and traditional music from various parts of the world, as well as for more global genres, such as rap. This fact probably is the reason for which these genres are underrepresented in regular music institutions.

As one of the organizers and having an academic background in music, it is noticeable how Simon talks about the mutual –or rather the *common*– musical learning that is taking place at *Spelrum*. He emphasizes the multiple ways in which musical learning can be realized, and how the importance of heterogeneous approaches to teaching and learning becomes obvious at *Spelrum* with its wide range of musicians, styles and cultural backgrounds. Simon stresses how such plurality of teaching and learning methods is something that is lacking in regular music education. The lack of various methods adapted to different kinds of musical styles, might restrict the choices of repertoire in regular music institutions, which is also highlighted by Westvall and Carson (2014). The methods are not the only influential aspects: at *Spelrum*, a broad range of instruments such as the flute, oud, darbuka, djembe, accordion, as well as electronic instruments from all over the world, is represented. *Spelrum* is also a space for dance and visual art, and every Saturday the classes finishes with an event where everyone takes part in the musical theme of the day. This could be, for instance, Syrian folk songs, hybrid music based on Balkan and Swedish folk songs, French rap or the participants’ own compositions.

The social aspect of projects like *Spelrum* and *Escola Portátil* are vital. People meet, have

coffee, talk, play and perform together. All these aspects are welding people together. In the musical actions, you “create a unique musical expression together”, as Simon says. This is, perhaps, the significant feature of expressive forms of culture (Lidskog, Pripp and Westvall 2018). Each person’s musical competence can be “made use of”, according to Simon. This is true both when it comes to practical skills and other kinds of musical knowledge. When a participant teaches his/her fellow musicians, they experience how others both recognize and master their musical contributions. Passing on musical knowledge to others can create a feeling of belonging and a sense of pride.

Musical intersections

One of the key aspects in *Spelrum* is to create musical intersections where there are no musical majority norms, and where the participants are not expected to perform in a certain way, but act as their genuine selves. The mere presence of the participants is important for the project, and so are the conversations connected to the musical activities. The Saturday activities are not scheduled on a long-term basis, as flexibility is a key part of the project. This approach enables unexpected musical opportunities to evolve during a semester, and it is also a way of leaving room for the community to develop musically together. These prerequisites also create “unlikely constellations” of musicians as Simon expresses it. Musically, this leads to interesting hybrid music styles when various influences are taken on board by the group.

One of the aims of the project has been to provide a context for further networking. This context seems to give the musicians possibilities to network, not only with the “majority society” but also on a more horizontal and equal level, which will provide vital opportunities in their future musical involvement in the wider society. Some of the participants are also established music teachers and music students. Their participation in *Spelrum* has the potential to give long term effects on how musical learning will be approached within the regular music education institutions. “Integration is not about adaption from one or the other. You are creating together in the present” as Simon expresses it.

A musical group or band can be a metaphor for an open and free society, one that reflects the needs of the individual, where each individual is actively engaged and equally treated (Westvall 2014). In this article, we aimed to exemplify and discuss intercultural aspects of musical practices in various ways: From the transmission of the goals and organization of a musical extension project from Brazil to Sweden, the demographical change of space of a learning context from a traditional scene to a more open place, a need of a local context to preserve the knowledge of traditional music styles in one project, to including new styles and develop hybrid music in another project. Nevertheless, these all come down to intertwined social and musical reasons for participation in communities of musical practice. Affinity and descent (Shelemay 2011) are certainly vital aspects in this context. *Spelrum* is aiming for affinity through diversity, while *Escola Portátil* emphasizes affinity through musical descent.

Social situations in which individuals interact with each other do not automatically allow for affinity. Affinity is certainly a key factor for the musical as well as the social development in the two musical settings described in this article. The *musicking* processes that are present in

both *Escola Portátil* and *Spelrum* do, to some extent, maintain a repertoire based on specific musical traditions. Yet, the repertoire is also affected by the groups' internal processes and every musician is affected by external influences, such as the local context in which they live as well as global aspects. Sometimes, diasporic contexts become relevant, specifically for the participants in *Spelrum*. These transformative aspects affect the musicians as well as the repertoire. This means that although the various shapes and forms of traditional music are part of the repertoire of these two groups, they are also communities of contemporary culture production. Through the process of *musicking* and by the intercultural nature of these communities of musical practice, the cultural props are reversed and renegotiated. Most importantly, social and musical interaction and common creation seem to be key aspects for intercultural communication and co-existence in both projects.

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