



Cidades

Comunidades e Territórios

Au21 | 2021

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Paula Guerra and Elizabeth Turner



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/cidades/4227>

ISSN: 2182-3030

Publisher

DINÂMIA'CET-IUL

Electronic reference

Paula Guerra and Elizabeth Turner, “‘People Have the Power’ : Songs of Resistance in Late Modernity”, *Cidades* [Online], Au21 | 2021, Online since 20 October 2021, connection on 21 October 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/cidades/4227>



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‘People Have the Power’: Songs of Resistance in Late Modernity

Where there were deserts I saw fountains/ Like cream the waters rise/ And we strolled there together/ With none to laugh or criticize/ And the leopard and the lamb/ Lay together truly bound/ I was hoping in my hoping/ To recall what I had found/ (...) People have the power/ People have the power/ People have the power/ People have the power. The power to dream, to rule/ To wrestle the world from fools/ It's decreed: the people rule/ It's decreed: the people rule/ Listen. I believe everything we dream/ Can come to pass through our union/ We can turn the world around/ We can turn the earth's revolution¹.

This Patti Smith song was the fuse that ignited this Special Issue. We would like to acknowledge that 2021, like the year before it, has been a very difficult time for many. The impacts of COVID-19 continue to be globally significant, and countries, cities and communities continue to grapple with its spread. This Special Issue centres on popular music and particularly on music as an expression of power in the face of social problems. While none of the articles included here relate directly to the COVID-19 pandemic we hope that some of its themes will be meaningful for those who are engaged in the struggle against it. Schreiber (2019) sees music as energy becoming entertainment. An expression of power, and not only sonic or emotional power. Music, especially when created in response to the world's social problems, becomes a unique force (LeVie, 2015). However, not every song addressing society's problems becomes a protest song. Let us consider the primal North American examples: songs written at times of great crisis, such as the American Civil War, like ‘When Johnny Comes Marching Home’ are not protest songs. It was not until 1870, with ‘Sometimes I feel like a motherless child’, about the horrible mother-child separations in the slave plantations of the South that the first protest songs emerged in the USA. Taking this idea of music as a form of denunciation, it is imperative to discuss the role of popular music in capturing political dynamics pointing towards the existence of new shapes of protest songs. To discuss this, we must put a broader view of politics into perspective. Bayat (2013) speaks of non-movements as social activism, meaning the collective action of non-organized and scattered actors, a different way of affirming their youth, identity, and objectives (Guerra, 2019a). If we only focus on classic notions of politics, as demonstrations framed by party or union action, we disregard emerging features of social reality. For instance, artists like Pablo Vittar, Liniker, Linn da Quebrada and Johnny Hooker have produced artistic trajectories that embody strategies of political resistance permanently coupled with their sound and lyrical discourses. Through the different modulations of musical genres (soul, *brega*, funk), their performances are connected to the latent experiences and oppressions experienced by the LGBT community in Brazil. This reality has been arising all around the globe, pointing to the existence of new shapes of protest songs.

In fact, these new forms of protest are not a result of single concerted action, but rather a set of actions by scattered artists aiming for the same goal. We set out to examine a number of issues related to the new shapes of protest songs from all over the world which have been at the root of large social movements arising in the last decade in response to environmental disaster, growing xenophobia and racism, recrudescing job instability and unemployment, religious fanaticism, gender inequality and LGBTQI+ discrimination, city gentrification and touristification, new human slavery, paedophilia, animal sacrifice, among others (Guerra, 2019b). Similarly, we are invested in a clear global scope, seeking contributions that move away from a Eurocentric (essentially Anglo-Saxon) perspective that still dominates youth studies, also because only through multiple different analyses, in different historical contexts, can the state of the art move forward.

First, we search for the role of popular music as a potentiator of political mobilization and as an important indicator of the profound changes and identity reconstructions of youngsters in late modernity (Guerra et al., 2019). Songs can constitute manifestations that not only seek to denounce but also to intervene/act, and sometimes provoke action. Songs such as Patti Smith's superlative hymn ‘People have the power’ – which has been revived by Patti

¹ Smith, P. (1988). *People Have the Power*. United States of America.

herself in her latest concerts – take on the role of producers of denunciation and protest, and creators of their own themes, by provoking and changing social life because of the perceptions of social reality they construct. In parallel, with this Special Issue we also intend to demonstrate the ways in which music creates and constructs shared experiences and the power of protest songs to bring people together and shape political subjectivities. For example, rap and *mahragan* formed the soundtrack of the Tunisian and the Egyptian Revolutions and illustrate the classic power of protest songs (Sánchez García, 2018). In a post-Revolution period, due to and with the political demobilization, these genres returned to their previous roles of crystallizers of youths' experience of their social contexts (Feixa, 2017; Feixa & Guerra, 2017). Moreover, these cultural products enable young people to become active political subjects, positioned as agents combatting marginalization. The case of Moroccan rap practiced by women in Casablanca is very interesting in this respect.

This Special Issue aims to contribute to understandings of the unique force of popular music as a response to contemporary social issues and as a form of resistance. We hope that it will introduce new perspectives and stimulate further reflection, discussion and research. Six articles on the theme of this Special Issue are written in English. They showcase recent research in contexts that range from Brazil, New Zealand, and Spain to Portugal. The articles employ a range of methodologies to explore interesting cultural phenomena, different social and political contexts and discourses as well as case studies from a range of perspectives. They contribute with new readings, understandings, and knowledge about the role of popular music in the mediation of the development of identity and a sense of belonging; in resistance and protest in response to social problems and political conflicts; as a form of social intervention; and, finally, as a catalyst for new political practices.

In the first of these articles, “Ultimate *bias*. *Memorabilia*, K-pop and fandom identities”, Paula Guerra and Sofia Sousa investigate the meanings associated with memorabilia items collected by female Portuguese K-pop fans. Framed by an understanding of K-pop as a hybrid, mass cultural product of globalization, the authors examine the contribution of symbols of this genre and of favoured idols (*biases*), such as CDs and photocards, to processes of both personal and collective fan identity formation and the creation of a sense of belonging. As a beautifully illustrated contribution to the sociology on this theme in the local context of Portuguese youth fandom, the article demonstrates the role of *memorabilia* in the nexus between fans and the cultural industry.

The second article, “Resistance, protest and configurations of time, space and place in Herbs' Pacific reggae songs” by Elizabeth Turner, presents an interesting interpretive analysis of the ways in which resistance, protest and critical social commentary are produced in the discourse of the EP ‘What’s Be Happen?’ by the band Herbs in Aotearoa New Zealand. Following an initial exploration of the notions of resistance and protest in the field of popular music studies, the author draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to analyse the construction of meaning in Herbs' music, lyrics and imagery in relation to their historical context. In a final, innovative move, the author employs Bakhtin's concept of the artistic chronotope to consider the ways in which narrative representations of time and space relationships contribute to meaning.

In the third English language article, “Musical Politics: Protest and Dissent in Aotearoa New Zealand”, Alison Stevens Booth also investigates songs that relate to issues of dissent and protest in the unique historical and contemporary socio-political context of Aotearoa New Zealand. They include songs from Māori, Pacific Island and European heritage musicians that have voiced, mobilized and helped to shape opinion and the country's sense of identity. Based on a valuable thematic review and historical overview of the ways in which local and international campaigns and concerns are expressed in popular song over 60 years, the article focuses on a representative sample of recordings. It identifies and discusses their themes, their context and the musicians as well as changes in technology, and changes in the music industry and in government funding that impact on the role played by these recordings.

The fourth article, entitled “‘Dio\$ No\$ Libre Del Dinero’. An essay about the intersections between post-feminist rhetorics and (post)cultural industries in Rosalía's work” by Paula Guerra and Priscila Alvarez-Cueva, aims ultimately to discuss and put into perspective the ways in which Rosalía – as an artist – triggers an expanded set of post-feminist narratives, not only in her lyrics but also in her video clips in this context of late modernity. Thus, maintaining the principle that post-feminist rhetorics are comprehensive and multifaceted, four songs were analysed: ‘Malamente’ (2018), ‘Yo x Ti, Tu x Mi’ (2019), ‘Aute Cuture’ (2019) and ‘Juro Que’ (2020). In this way, authors intended to gauge the dualities that guide Rosalía's artistic discourse, thus going towards a dialogic

between the (post)cultural industries and the sociological discourse about the objects, narratives and creative imagery emerging from them. Rosalía, an artist who is only 27 years old, has already won the majority of awards in Spain and Latin America for a single work that has put flamenco on the agenda.

The next article, “Intergenerational struggles and technological dramas of the neobakala music scene” by Eduardo Leste, explores tensions between generations through a focus on the virtual neobakala music scene in Spain. The article investigates the conflict between different generations over the construction of a nostalgic narrative about the youth cultures that produced the earlier ‘Bakala’ scene. The author’s examination of the impact of technological innovation on music scenes includes the processes of technological dramas in which, in this context, technology has been used either to subvert parental control or, through a nostalgia discourse, to establish a hierarchy of music scenes. In addition to interesting conclusions about the concept of generation, and the roles of nostalgia and memory for neobakalas in the face of the problems of late modernity, the author identifies thought-provoking implications of this community’s nostalgic discourse.

In “‘All my life I’ve been a Thug’. The (de)construction of the urban through rap”, Sofia Sousa and Paula Guerra question to what extent music or other artistic productions can be a means of recognition and learning about a territory. In this way, the focus of this article was on an analysis of the lyrics of thirteen artists’ songs, with the aim of putting into perspective the lyrical messages that are transmitted, the various relationships or references that may be made to geographical contexts, more concretely ‘social neighborhoods’, and concomitantly to understand how these productions are guided by stereotypical affirmative positions concerning the representation of the gangster artist, the experiences and the deviant consumption. How does a small country like Portugal position itself, in terms of musical production and consumption, facing these processes of musical resistance? Finally, the authors try to understand in what sense the artists under analysis still reflect in their artistic production’s themes such as exclusion, violence, criminality and other issues. This article seeks to emphasize the role of artistic creations as (re)producers of relevant knowledge about social realities.

The seventh article, “‘There is no love in SP’: Music, graffiti, and youth cultures in political protests in Brazil”, was written by Thiago Pereira Alberto, Luiza Bittencourt and Daniel Domingues. It examines the role of music and graffiti in youth culture in São Paulo, and the ways in which connections between them can mobilize resistive and activist political practices. The article focuses on the case of a well-known song by rapper Criolo, which was inspired by the urban art movement, ‘Mais Amor, Por Favor’ [More love, please]. They jointly stimulated an influential urban ‘artist’ and activist youth movement. In compelling references to the many and diverse crises that have marked Brazil in the past decade, the authors demonstrate the connection between this song, those crises, creative and collective youth culture and activist responses.

The next article returns to Portugal with a focus on the experiences of protagonists in the Portuguese rock scene in the last 50 years. In “Rock’n’roll, drugs, stigmas and risks: An approach to the current state of affairs in Portugal”, Ana Martins and Paula Guerra present an interesting exploration of the realities related to the long-standing association between youth subcultures, rock music, and risky behavior involving alcohol, drugs and sex. Responses in interviews by predominantly male protagonists who were in the world of rock music in the 1960s, or who are active today, are framed by the context of cultural and political changes in Portugal over the past 50 years. While the myth of ‘sex, drugs and rock’n’roll’ is seen by some as a reality in a country still perceived as relatively conservative, participants’ own experiences range across the spectrum of possibilities.

The article, “Aesthetics or something more? Neofolk as a vehicle for the dissemination of far-right ideology” by Manuel Pereira Soares, argues that popular music has been used as a means for political mobilization. Examples of this are the American folk, the *chanson française* or the Portuguese intervention music of the 1960s and 1970s and its anti-war messages. Punk, hip-hop, rap or Riot Grrrls in more recent decades also seek to raise awareness of racial issues, gender inequality or patriarchal oppression. Less attention has been paid to the extreme right’s use of music as a means of promoting their ideas. This article aims to clarify whether the use of Nazi-fascist symbolism and clothing by these groups is only an aesthetic issue or something more. Based on documentary analysis and netnographic methodology, the author analyzed interviews, videos of live performances, songs, and albums of some of the bands that are most often accused of seeking to hide a political agenda behind their musical projects. Special attention was given to the comment boxes of the analyzed videos in order to understand how fans perceive the used aesthetics.

Last but not least: the last article of this Special Issue is authored by Siyuan Ren and Carles Feixa entitled “Being Nomadic and Overseas Rappers: Construction of Hybrid Identity in the Chinese Hip-Hop Scene” explores the function of intercultural communication of Chinese rap music and the construction of hybrid identities by using methods of discourse analysis: narrative semiotics, visual semiology and sociolinguistics of globalization. The general context of the research is the development of global youth culture and rap music as intercultural formulation of local identities. Songs by two Chinese rap groups are analysed: Higher Brothers and Bohan Phoenix. Indeed, this text attempts to scrutinize their use of rap lyrics in order to promote intercultural communication and hybrid identity construction.

This Special Issue also includes two particularly important book reviews by sociologist Paula Guerra. The first one focuses on the book *El Rey: Diario de un Latin King*. This book arose from a promise made 15 years ago by Carles Feixa to César Gustavo Andrade Arteaga – also known as King Manaba –, and whose content was cemented in the joint writing of a book centered on the life story of King Manaba. This circumstance has metamorphosed this book into a dialogue-book, a co-created book, a book between science and society. And, above all, it mirrors Carles Feixa’s trajectory of academic, scientific and citizen excellence, marked by the intense phenomenology of the Chicago School. If we could not say more about this book, we would say that it is, at least, a milestone for urban studies, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies that have young people and their (sub)cultures at their core. The second review focuses on the most recent book by José Machado Pais: *Jóvenes y creatividad*. This book, published in Spanish in 2020, is also a milestone work. First, because it is an invitation to think about youth – in a polyhedral way – with a diachronic and synchronic look, between the past and the present, but above all with an eye on the future. Secondly, because it places the spotlight back on youth creativity which has long been removed from social sciences’ narratives: thus, it retrieves youth non-conformist creativity and puts it at the service of facing the crisis and its intense societal challenges, showing its vivacity, in these dark times, both in the reinvention of professionalization or cultural labor strategies and in the presentation of its artistic-cultural manifestations as new forms of active citizenship. Third, because this book is a collection of various studies and perspectives by José Machado Pais: an inspiring, prolific, and emblematic researcher – with worldwide reach – on youth. Numerous works on immigration, creativity, citizenship, youth, and social movements are thus presented. In fact, it is an analysis of a set of exemplary sociological texts that, in turn, have marked and will continue to mark academic research and beyond.

Finally, this Special Issue includes two interviews: the first one entitled “Other Roads to Ride with The Legendary Tigerman: Conversation with Paulo Furtado in April 2021”; and the second one entitled “Travelling with Guitars at the Top: Conversation with Tó Trips in May 2021”. Both interviews derive from the podcast ‘Lost and Found Sounds’. This is a podcast that takes on a space for citizen participation of musicians from the city of Porto – and all over the country – that, through the option for creative freedom, reinvent our daily lives every day through the possibilities of achievement, freedom and resistance offered by the artwork of sounds and words. In the current context, conversations are in online format, and address the main impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the working conditions and daily lives of these musicians, as well as the strategies they have found to face and respond to the new challenges that fill their daily lives these days. We are currently experiencing the most widespread public health crisis on a global scale in the last 100 years. Although in differentiated ways, confinement and social distancing have had and are still having an impact on all social groups, resulting in a generalized experience of alienation, meaninglessness, absence of expectations, great uncertainty, and permeability to risks – notably for those who make (or used to make) music. This podcast is, itself, a strategy to make it possible to live even better in and with music in these uncertain times. It is hosted in the Casa Comum [Common House] of the Rectory of the University of Porto, whose partners are the KISMIF Conference, the Transdisciplinary Research Centre ‘Culture, Space and Memory’ (CITCEM) and the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto (IS-UP). It is coordinated by Paula Guerra and includes the participation of Ana Oliveira, António Carvalho, Paulo Gusmão, Sofia Sousa and Susana Serro. It is available at <https://www.up.pt/casacomum/sons-perdidos-e-achados/>.

Good readings (and songs) between Porto, Auckland and Barcelona.

Paula Guerra, Universidade do Porto, Instituto de Sociologia, Griffith Center for Social and Cultural Research, Portugal.

Elizabeth Turner, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.

Carles Feixa, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain.

Special Issue Editors

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