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**Musical Lusofonia and the African-Diaspora in Postcolonial Portugal: Batida and Lisbon as a Global Cultural Capital**

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Musical *Lusofonia* and  
the African-Diaspora in  
Postcolonial Portugal:  
*Batida* and Lisbon as a  
Global Cultural Capital

by

HARRY EDWARDS

## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role of music as an agent of change in Portugal since the 1990s, using batida, an African-diaspora inspired and created electronic dance music from Lisbon, as a case study. Using music as a focal point, it will analyse postcolonial discourses around Portuguese national identity and the status of the African-diaspora community within Portuguese society. The paper will seek to address whether it is possible to transform unequal cultural and linguistic relations established under colonialism into new egalitarian and multicultural urban spaces and cultures. It argues that while the agency of African-diaspora artists is greater than has previously been acknowledged, structural constraints of poverty and racism still undermine the extent to which the postcolonial Portuguese national identity has shifted to truly embrace its African-diaspora population.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harry is currently completing his master's degree in Global History at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Since starting the MA Global History program, his research focus has been on music in history and how it intersects with power, politics and identity in post-colonial contexts. He is particularly interested in how different forms of electronic dance music transfer, translate and transform as they travel around the world.

“As a portuguese Girl living in a foreign country i Can’t be more Proud of my country for showing to the World our multicultural roots with those African beats with these Amazing artists and giving them the spotlight they deserve. We don’t forget about you,you guys are part of our history/ culture and we love you Cap vert,Angola,Mozambique,Sao Tomé, Guinée-Bissau and Timor oriental. Africa and Portugal united ❤️” – valoo2807, 2018.<sup>1</sup>

As vivid red light engulfed the stage of Lisbon’s *Altice Arena*, a man dressed all in white is revealed to the twenty-thousand capacity crowd gathered for the 63<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *Eurovision Song Contest*. Scheduled to perform just after the overwhelming sonic smorgasbord of the main contest, João Barbosa (better known by his artist alias *Branko*)— the man dressed all in white—starts to play his melodic electronic beats for the night’s interval act. 2018 was the first time Portugal had hosted the world’s largest music event and the interval performance was one of the main platforms the organisers had to stamp their own mark on the event. Rather than remain within the traditional musical paradigm of

*Eurovision* however, the Portuguese planners decided to share a very different musical offering with the estimated 186 million viewers tuning in from around the world.<sup>2</sup> The performance was notable because unlike most *Eurovision* performances, it blended together several musical styles originating from migrant and African-diaspora communities in Lisbon. Since the 1990s, an increasing number of young artists from predominantly disadvantaged diaspora communities have created new types of music inspired by various musical styles from Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), their material conditions in postcolonial Lisbon, and other global youth cultures, primarily electronic dance music and hip hop. Fernando Arenas claims that the dissemination of these artists’ music has fundamentally changed popular culture in Lisbon, be that in everyday language, fashion trends or in the city’s nightlife.<sup>3</sup> It seemed somewhat apt, therefore, that the interval performance at *Eurovision 2018* was sound-tracked by Lisbon born veteran DJ and producer *Branko*, famous for his role in the band *Buraka Som Sistema* who popularised Angolan *kuduro* music around the world, alongside three Lisbon based vocalists all of Cape

1 Comment by *YouTube* user valoo2807 on Eurovision Song Contest, “Interval Act: Branko & Sara Tavares / Dino D’Santiago / Mayra Andrade – Eurovision 2018.” *YouTube Video*, May 15, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w1LjEeDw0>.

2 Evert Groot, “186 Million Viewers for the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest,” *Eurovision.tv*, May 23, 2018. <https://eurovision.tv/story/186-million-viewers-2018-eurovision-song-contest>.

3 Fernando Arenas, “Migration and the Rise of African Lisbon: Time-Space of Portuguese (Post)colonialit.,” *Postcolonial Studies* 18, no. 4 (2015): 159-160.

Verdean descent: Sara Tavares, Dino D’Dantiago and Mayra Andrade. The inclusion of African-diaspora musicians as representatives of Portugal on such a prominent stage is testament to the country’s increasing emphasis on diversity as a part of Portuguese national identity.

Left under the official video of the *Eurovision 2018* interval performance, valoo2807’s *YouTube* comment quoted above is illustrative of a developing postcolonial Portuguese identity that embraces multiculturalism domestically and historic ties to Portugal’s former colonies abroad.<sup>4</sup> While seemingly well-intentioned, the comment is nonetheless tone-deaf to a longer history of colonial inequalities and racism in Portugal. Jorge de la Barre and Bart Vanspauwen argue that it can “neither be discarded nor asserted” that *lusofonia*, the idea alluded to by valoo2807 that the Portuguese-speaking world shares a unique cultural and historical bond that should be celebrated and strengthened, is “a mere extension of Portugal’s imperial dream in the postcolonial age.”<sup>5</sup> However, *lusofonia* is a contested ideology in itself which cannot be purely defined as an elite project. The fact that *Branko* was made the designated performer by the Portuguese *Eurovision* organising committee demonstrates the national

significance that music originating from Lisbon’s African-diaspora communities has gained. This is testament to the ability of the music and those who make and support it to insert themselves into and alter popular conceptions of *lusofonia*. However, the choice of Branko, who is White, as the central artist of the performance is also indicative of the limits of official expressions of *lusofonia*.

After first analysing postcolonial discourses around Portuguese national identity and the status of the African-diaspora community within Portuguese society, this paper will thoroughly investigate the role of music as an agent of change in Portugal since the 1990s. In doing so, it will seek to address whether it is possible to transform unequal cultural and linguistic relations established under colonialism into new egalitarian and multicultural urban spaces and cultures? This is an important question for researchers, not only in Portugal, but across Europe as changing demographics alter postcolonial European identities.<sup>6</sup> This paper will supplement the existing literature by using the underutilised case study of *batida*, the African-diaspora inspired and created electronic dance music from Lisbon in the 2000s and 2010s.<sup>7</sup>

4 Ibid., 358.

5 Jorge de la Barre and Bart Vanspauwen, “A Musical ‘Lusofonia’? Music Scenes and the Imagination of Lisbon,” *The World of Music New Series 2* (2013): 119, 125; 139-140.

6 Derek Pardue, *Cape Verde, Let’s Go: Creole Rappers and Citizenship in Portugal* (University of Illinois Press, 2015), 11.

7 For an insightful overview of contemporary electronic dance music in Lisbon alongside a general history see Sam Backer, “Afro-Lisbon and the Lusophone Atlantic: Dancing Toward

Using a mixture of secondary sources and primary reporting on Lisbon's music scene, this paper will argue that the agency of African-diaspora artists is greater than has been acknowledged in the existing historiography, thanks in part to the democratising effects of the internet. Nevertheless, structural constraints of poverty and racism still undermine the extent to which postcolonial Portuguese national identity has shifted to truly embrace its African-diaspora population.

### LUSOTROPICALISM, LUSOFONIA AND MIGRATION

Portugal at the tail end of the Twentieth Century had to fundamentally recalibrate its national identity and foreign policy. The 1974 Carnation Revolution, decolonisation, migration from the ex-colonies, and European Union membership in 1986 had drastically altered Portuguese society, economy and its image of itself.<sup>8</sup> By the 1990s, nearly all discussions of national history, culture

and identity had focused around asserting the Portuguese's unique facility to promote cross-cultural exchange and fusion between different world cultures. However, these new discourses came imbued with considerable imperialist baggage that represented a failure to critically engage with Portugal's colonial legacy.<sup>9</sup> Animated by the classic tropes of Portuguese national identity—sea, earth, homeland and language—key components of colonial-era *lusotropicalism* were recycled back into the contemporary political zeitgeist in the form of *lusofonia*.<sup>10</sup> António de Oliveira Salazar's authoritarian colonial government had adopted *lusotropicalism* as its official foreign policy for Portugal's remaining African colonies from the 1950s until its demise in 1974.<sup>11</sup> Theorised by Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, the novelty of *lusotropicalism* was that it forwarded a positive interpretation of Portuguese colonialism that emphasised Portugal's supposedly less repressive rule, enlightened culture and higher levels of miscegenation when compared to other European colonisers. While the official advocacy of *lusotropicalism* was abandoned after 1974 by subsequent democratically elected governments in Portugal, a similar sense of inherent cultural exceptionalism

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the Future," *Afropop Worldwide* [Podcast audio], September 8, 2016. <http://afropop.org/audio-programs/afro-lisbon-and-the-lusophone-atlantic-dancing-towards-the-future>.

8 Miguel Vale de Almeida, "Portugal's Colonial Complex: From Colonial Lusotropicalism to Postcolonial Lusophony," *Paper Presented at Queen's Postcolonial Research Forum*, Queen's University, Belfast, April 2008. <http://miguelvaledalmeida.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/portugals-colonial-complex.pdf>, 8 and Timothy Sieber, "Composing Lusophonia: Multiculturalism and National Identity in Lisbon's 1998 Musical Scene," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 11, no. 2 (2002): 163.

9 Sieber, "Composing Lusophonia," 163 and Almeida, "Portugal's Colonial Complex," 8.

10 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'?", 121 and 123.

11 Almeida, "Portugal's Colonial Complex," 1.

continued to inform Portuguese attitudes towards its former colonies.<sup>12</sup> Despite the widespread popularity of Brazilian music and television having a more significant role in creating a postcolonial *lusophone* imagination, that did not stop Portuguese politicians and cultural institutions in the 1990s more confidently asserting the centrality of Lisbon as the cultural apex of the Portuguese-speaking world.<sup>13</sup> The 1990s would subsequently prove to be a vital decade in both solidifying and increasing the visibility of *lusofonia*. The decade saw not only the hosting of the *World Exposition (Expo '98)* in Lisbon and the formation of the *Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)* commonly known as the Portuguese Commonwealth, but it also saw the concept of *lusofonia* taken up by journalists, politicians, non-governmental institution and scholars.<sup>14</sup>

The historical origins of *lusofonia* can therefore be found in Portuguese colonialism. Nevertheless, migration from Portugal's former colonies has changed the emphasis of the

concept.<sup>15</sup> Since the Fifteenth Century, migration out of Portugal, mainly to its colonies or elsewhere in Europe, had been higher than inward migration. However, in the 1960s and 1970s this started to change.<sup>16</sup> The first notable increase in immigration started in the 1960s as thousands of Cape Verdeans were recruited to fill burgeoning labour shortages in the metropole caused by conscription to the colonial wars and high rates of emigration. As with later non-White migrants, these peoples' economic activity was mainly restricted to construction and low-skilled employment. Nevertheless, this marked the first steps in what Angolan writer José Eduardo Agualusa would later celebrate as the "re-Africanisation of Lisbon," referring to the city's ten percent African population during the early-modern period.<sup>17</sup> Decolonisation in the 1970s would again alter Portugal's demographic make-up, only this time much more radically. Over half a million Portuguese nationals would migrate into Portugal from the former colonies in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation. This accounted for over 5% of the total Portuguese population at that time. While most of the predominantly White *retornados* were able to integrate relatively seamlessly into mainstream Portuguese society, along with later groups of migrants

12 Ibid, 3.

13 Isabel Ferin Cunha, Stuart Davis, and Joseph Straubhaar, "The construction of a transnational Lusophone media space: A historiographic analysis," *Popular Communication* 14, no. 4 (2016): 212-213.

14 Bart Vanspauwen, "The (R)Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon." MA diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2010. <https://run.unl.pt/bitstream/10362/5681/1/bart.pdf>, 13-16. Vanspauwen's argument is repeated in Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'?", 132-133.

15 Vanspauwen, "The (R)Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon," 16.

16 Arenas, "Migration and the Rise of African Lisbon," 354.

17 Ibid., 354 and 359.

from PALOP countries in the 1980s and 1990s, non-White migrants faced systematic discrimination.<sup>18</sup> Common with other postcolonial European countries, Portugal sought migrants to boost its economy and allay its low demographic growth, yet those same migrants habitually faced prejudice and racism.<sup>19</sup>

Fed by latent *lusotropicalist* assumptions, statements on the non-racist character of the Portuguese are hegemonic in mainstream discourses.<sup>20</sup> All the while, migrants and diaspora communities from the PALOP are disproportionately confronted with social exclusion, economic exploitation, restrictions to citizenship and substandard living conditions.<sup>21</sup> Pedro Gomes, a founding member of the influential Lisbon record label *Príncipe Records*, argued in an interview with online music publication *Resident Advisor* that Portugal “didn’t do ghettos the way New York City did ghettos.” The Portuguese government “put these people in the middle of fucking nowhere, sometimes with no roads to connect them to civilisation.” It was this isolation he reasons that has fuelled levels of distrust between African-diaspora communities and mainstream Portuguese society.<sup>22</sup>

The issue of citizenship for children of migrants born in Portugal has exacerbated issues of distrust and economic deprivation even further. Denied Portuguese passports under the *jus sanguinis* citizenship policies established by the 1981 *Portuguese Nationality Law*, these people were economically and socially barred from accessing the state, despite living their whole lives in Portugal. While the law was amended in the summer of 2018, the damage of decades of legal uncertainty has left the relationship between the Portuguese state and many in African-diaspora communities irreconcilable ruined.<sup>23</sup> Portugal’s migratory history is thus inextricably linked to its colonial history, with many of the same racial inequalities under colonialism reflected back into cities such as Lisbon.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, *lusofonia* cannot only be assessed as a concept to understand cultural exchanges between Portugal and its former colonies, but also as a domestic category that tries to grapple with an increasingly diverse country.

18 Ibid., 355.

19 Ibid., 356-357 and Etienne Mullet, Neto Félix and Maria Conceição Pinto, “Can music reduce anti-dark-skin prejudice? A test of a cross-cultural musical education programme,” *Psychology of Music* 44, no. 3 (2016): 389.

20 Arenas, “Migration and the Rise of African Lisbon,” 358.

21 Almeida, “Portugal’s Colonial Complex,” 9.

22 Ryan Keeling, “The Ghetto Sound of Lisbon,” *residentadvisor.net*, March 10, 2014. [https://](https://www.residentadvisor.net/features/2021)

[www.residentadvisor.net/features/2021](https://www.residentadvisor.net/features/2021).

23 Ana Rita Gil, “Amendments to the Portuguese Nationality Law – Towards an (even) More Inclusive Citizenship.” *globalcit.eu*, August 1, 2018. <http://globalcit.eu/amendments-to-the-portuguese-nationality-law-towards-an-even-more-inclusive-citizenship/>.

24 Arenas, “Migration and the Rise of African Lisbon,” 354.



## MUSIC AND THE POSTCOLONIAL LUSOPHONE WORLD

The 2008 economic crash and Eurozone debt crisis hit Portugal particularly hard. The Portuguese government's subsequent acceptance of international financial assistance on the condition of enacting austerity significantly exacerbated social inequality in the country. In this context, Portugal's out-migration overtook in-migration once again. To a much greater extent than other former colonial European countries, many Portuguese emigrants intriguingly decided to relocate to former Portuguese colonies, particularly Brazil and Angola.<sup>25</sup> Powerful diaspora connections and the trade in Portuguese-language cultural goods over time has consolidated a social space around which *lusofonia* could be imagined.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, as Barre and Vanspauwen argue, it was with music that *lusofonia* found its most natural expression with Lisbon as its epicentre. Historically the performance of various *lusophone* musical styles has taken place in Lisbon. Simultaneously, music provides a useful platform with which to explore age-old Portuguese cultural fascinations such as sea, discovery and homeland. Unlike other mediums, music also provides

a way to communicate and engage culturally with the wider *lusophone* world, as well as acting as a tool with which to understand an increasingly multicultural Portugal.<sup>27</sup> However, in the formative stages of what will be referred to from now on as *musical lusofonia*, the concept was characterised by appropriation and one-sided exploitation of cultural capital.

An indicative example of the one-sided relationship established under a *musical lusofonia* framework was Lisbon's *Expo '98*. Timed to coincide with the quincentennial of the Portuguese 'discoveries', the exposition provided the Portuguese government with a prominent stage on which to promote their capital as a modern European city and as an important link between Europe, South America and Africa.<sup>28</sup> The musical programming at *Expo '98*—one of the main draws of the festivities—aimed to magnify Lisbon's global cultural significance based on its historic role as a colonial metropolis, its European connections and its reputation as a haven for *lusophone* culture.<sup>29</sup> However, the musical messaging at *Expo '98* rarely transcended essentialist framings of Portuguese national identity. Despite the official rhetoric praising cultural and musical fusion,

25 Ibid., 356.

26 Vanspauwen, "The (R)Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon," 13 and Cunha, Davis, and Straubhaar, "The construction of a transnational Lusophone media space," 212-213.

27 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'?", 119 and 139-140.

28 Details on *Expo '98* from Sieber, "Composing Lusophonia," 163 and Vanspauwen, "The (R) Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon," 21.

29 Sieber, "Composing Lusophonia," 163-164 and 169.

Portuguese music was consistently presented as strictly White, while music from the PALOP was reserved only for the smaller stages and migrant communities were priced out from attending.<sup>30</sup> Timothy Sieber poignantly argues that the *musical lusofonia* on display at *Expo '98* was fundamentally hierarchical, defining Portuguese music and Lisbon as the universal agent, influencing music from elsewhere, but never being influenced by them in return.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this would become a recurring theme of how *musical lusofonia* was presented in the aftermath of the exposition.<sup>32</sup>

It was not until the influential release of Red Bull Music Academy's (RBMA) 2006 documentary *Lusofonia: a (R)Evolução*, that *musical lusofonia* became a more clearly defined concept.<sup>33</sup> The film starts by insisting contemporary musical movements in Lisbon such as *kuduro* and *kizomba* are just the newest expression of a five-hundred-year-old cultural relationship emerging from Portuguese colonialism. Against the dark backdrop of slavery, colonial wars and racism, the documentary suggests that "music and dancing were [positive] elements of integration." The press release for the documentary gleefully continues that in the Twenty-First Century we are witnessing a new generation for whom "a *lusophone*

streak is finally assumed in the creative sphere." The stated aim of the film was to "awaken" Portugal's media and cultural institutions to the "commercial potential lying in the Lisbon music movement" that "radiates" unique traits, whether rhythmic, melodic or lyrical which "epitomise, by way of sounds, five centuries of joint history in the territories which today share the Portuguese language."<sup>34</sup> Barre and Vanspauwen persuasively argue that RBMA insufficiently demonstrates how the groups of diverging sounds featured from Portugal, Brazil and the PALOP necessarily belong together under the banner of *lusofonia*. Indeed, they accuse the documentary makers of constructing a *musical lusofonia* movement and revolution "from scratch" in order to justify RBMA's commercial goals.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, they implicitly seem to agree with the film's central aim, arguing that "official support is required in order for this musical fusion to gain the visibility it warrants."<sup>36</sup> Underlying Barre and Vanspauwen's claim are questions around globalisation and visibility in a global cultural marketplace. They quote *EMI* record-label boss

30 Ibid., 170-171.

31 Ibid., 168.

32 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'," 125-126.

33 Ibid., 119.

34 The Press Kit released to accompany the documentary *Lusofonia: a (R)Evolução*, as quoted in Barbara Alge, "Lusofonia, a (R)Evolução: Discourses of Atlantic Roots and Routes in Luso World Music," *norient*, March 6, 2015. <https://norient.com/academic/alge2013/>.

35 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'," 119, 121, 128-129 and 131-132, and Vanspauwen, "The (R)Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon," 47.

36 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'," 119.

David Ferreira from *Lusofonia: a (R) Evolução*, when he says *lusofonia* “might be a vital space for [marketing music from Portugal], if we become bigger, we’ll survive as a culture.” Otherwise he claims, “we’ll disappear, we’ll be second-rate Spaniards, or fourth or fifth-rate Americans or whatever.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, *musical lusofonia* must be understood in relation to changing economic and social condition due to globalisation which makes it increasingly difficult for small countries like Portugal to be seen on a global stage, irrespective of their historical influence.<sup>38</sup>

## LISBON – THE GLOBAL CULTURAL CAPITAL

In the 2000s and 2010s, Portuguese cultural institutions and Lisbon’s tourism industry increasingly promoted the city as a unique city of culture, musical fusion and nightlife.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, efforts to increase awareness and improve the brand image of the city have proven to be remarkably successful. Numerous foreign publications have covered Lisbon as one of the coolest cities to visit in Europe. “12 Reasons to Love Lisbon” in *Forbes* (2016), “23 Reasons Why Lisbon Should be Your Next City Break” in *The Telegraph* (2018) and “7 Reasons Lisbon Could Be the Coolest Capital in Europe” on *CNN*

(2017) to name but a few.<sup>40</sup> Another example is the Will Coldwell piece in the *The Guardian’s* travel section in 2015, which explicitly focuses on Lisbon’s “new clubbing scene.” Coldwell discovers in the piece that nightlife in Lisbon has been directly inspired by *batida* artists. Employing important figures from Lisbon’s musical landscape such as *Branko*, Pedro Gomes and Angolan-born Pedro Coquenão (more commonly known by his artist pseudonym *Batida*) as guides, he describes a night-out enjoying the delights of several of Lisbon’s most lively bars, clubs and major nightspots. “The outdoor drinking culture,” Coldwell proclaims, “reinforces the idea that this is a city where people can mix freely.” This vibe is “something you rarely experience in a capital, but fits neatly with the collaborative, outward-looking nature of Lisbon’s music scene.”<sup>41</sup> In the academic

37 Ibid., 132.

38 Sieber, “Composing Lusophonia,” 183.

39 Barre and Vanspauwen, “A Musical ‘Lusofonia’?,” 120.

40 Examples of Lisbon’s good publicity in foreign publications: Fiona Dunlop, “7 Reasons Lisbon Could Be Coolest Capital in Europe,” *cnn.com*, August 25, 2017. <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/lisbon-coolest-city/index.html>; Will Coldwell, “Nightlife Reports: Lisbon’s New Clubbing Scene,” *theguardian.com*, January 23, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/jan/23/lisbon-new-clubbing-scene-nightlife-reports>; Ann Abel, “12 Reasons to Love Lisbon,” *forbes.com*, August 18, 2016. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/annabel/2016/08/18/12-reasons-to-love-lisbon/#7fa589b63b68>, Nina Santos, “7 Reasons Why You Should Visit Lisbon at Least Once in Your Lifetime,” *theculturetrip.com*, April 29, 2017. <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/portugal/articles/7-reasons-why-you-should-visit-lisbon-at-least-once-in-your-lifetime/>, and Hugh Morris, “23 Reasons Why Lisbon Should Be Your Next City Break,” *telegraph.co.uk*, May 12, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/portugal/articles/lisbon-portugal-best-city-break/>.

41 Coldwell, “Nightlife Reports: Lisbon’s New

literature, Arenas forwards more broadly that ‘African Lisbon’ from the 2000s onwards has become an increasingly “important source of cultural capital for the city... as Africans and their descendants have become woven into the city’s social and economic fabric.” African restaurants, nightclubs and diasporic urban culture in the form of music “emerges as an integral part of [Lisbon’s] appeal.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Barre and Vanspauwen argue that by promoting Lisbon’s diversity as a “source of cultural richness,” *lusofonia* and *musical lusofonia* “eventually become an instrument for the promotion of Lisbon as an open, multicultural city.”<sup>43</sup>

In Coldwell’s article in *The Guardian*, Coquenão also explains that “Lisbon’s relationship with Africa is like London’s with Jamaica,” as it is from “those places [that music] gets translated for a European audience.”<sup>44</sup> His comments are instructive as both a direct suggestion that Lisbon should be considered alongside London as a major agent in postcolonial musical production, but also that *lusophone* music is part of a wider process of musical consumption happening on a global scale.<sup>45</sup> Before the mid-2000s, the highly

dubious denotation of ‘world music’ in the pre-internet record industry—under which most music from the PALOP was included—unfairly benefited metropolitan centres such as Lisbon where the music was distributed from. ‘World music’ as a categorisation ultimately flattens cultural and musical distinctions for convenient consumption in Western media markets.<sup>46</sup> The same is true for *musical lusofonia*, whereby music from African-diaspora and PALOP musicians is assimilated under a categorisation that denotes its artistic lineage as coming from Portugal’s historical, linguistic and cultural legacy.<sup>47</sup> However, the internet has democratised music distribution to a point where it’s possible to circumvent the traditional record industry and their blunt classifications. In *Rave On: Global Adventures in Electronic Dance Music*, Matthew Collin postulates that the worldwide expansion of the internet has extended the reach of previously localised music scenes into new networks of global cultural consumption. Subsequently, new borderless networks can coalesce around any kind of sound one might hope to create. Collin argues this is particularly true for electronic dance music cultures that developed alongside the internet and knew instinctively how to take advantage of the new possibilities available.<sup>48</sup>

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Clubbing Scene.”  
 42 Arenas, “Migration and the Rise of African Lisbon,” 359.  
 43 Jorge de la Barre, “Music, City, Ethnicity. Exploring Music Scenes in Lisbon.” *Migrações* 7 (2010); 145.  
 44 Coldwell, “Nightlife Reports: Lisbon’s New Clubbing Scene.”  
 45 Barre, “Music, City, Ethnicity. Exploring Music Scenes in Lisbon”, 140.

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46 Sieber, “Composing Lusophonia,” 184.  
 47 Almeida, “Portugal’s Colonial Complex,” 10.  
 48 Matthew Collin, *Rave On: Global Adventures in Electronic Dance Music*. Profile Books, 2018, 6 and 10.

Via the internet, *batida* music can be listened to and enjoyed around the world. The internet has consequently allowed artists who come from hitherto commercially ignored scenes or genres to locate themselves in the global music scene independently of official recognition. *Musical lusofonia* is therefore not just a concept shaped by governmental, institutional or mainstream political agendas as had predominantly been the case at Expo '98 and with the RBMA, but it is also increasingly shaped by artists expressing their own experiences through music. Increased visibility has subsequently influenced official and quasi-official branding of Lisbon.

### **BATIDA, BURAKA SOM SISTEMA AND PRÍNCIPE RECORDS**

No band has been more important in spreading the influence African-diaspora music from Lisbon than *Buraka Som Sistema*.<sup>49</sup> Formed in the multicultural Amadora district of Lisbon, the band is made up of talent with both White-Portuguese and African-diaspora backgrounds. The collective reinterpreted the high-octane sound of Angolan *kuduro* in the mid-2000s with other electronic dance music influences from around the world. Proponents of sample-based production, the band prided itself on uncovering little-known underground dance music records via the internet and working

directly with the artists responsible to synthesise their production styles into the band's own unique sound. *Buraka Som Sistema's* volatile but exhilarating music subsequently spread around the world, in no small part thanks to their eccentric live shows.<sup>50</sup> *Mr. Angelo*, a vocalist in the band who moved to Lisbon from Angola when he was 17, says *Buraka Som Sistema's* global appeal came from the band's ability to combine so many different sounds. Mixing "the Rio de Janeiro scene via the Jamaica scene—all those movements somehow made sense on a big scale."<sup>51</sup> After 800 live performances and three critically acclaimed albums, it's difficult to dismiss *Buraka Som Sistema's* influence on both electronic dance music not only in Lisbon, but globally. The *New York Times* even wrote that *Buraka Som Sistema* "is postcolonialism you can dance to."<sup>52</sup> Thanks to their success, the band became synonymous with the *lusophone* 'revolution' as presented *Lusofonia: a (R)Evolução*. Indeed, they were supported by *RBMA* throughout their existence until the band's hiatus in

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50 BURAKA, "OFF THE BEATEN TRACK - Official Documentary (Web Version)." *YouTube Video*, December 1, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?51=&v=u5vAINF-D5Q>.

51 Rachel Donadio, "In a Lisbon Band, Echoes from Afar: Buraka Som Sistema Reveals Lisbon's Musical Melting Pot," *nytimes.com*, November 3, 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/04/arts/music/buraka-som-sistema-reveals-lisbons-musical-melting-pot.html>.

52 Ibid., and Marcus Dowling, "5 Buraka Som Sistema Moments That Changed the Game," *remezcla.com*, August 18, 2015. <http://remezcla.com/lists/music/5-buraka-som-sistema-moments-that-changed-the-game/>.

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49 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia?'," 131.

2016.<sup>53</sup> However, it would be unfair to claim *Buraka Som Sistema* were interested in forwarding *lusofonia* per se. Although the band claimed they could only have come from Lisbon's unique mixture of *lusophone* speaking diaspora communities, *Buraka Som Sistema* in their own self-produced documentary visited Venezuela, South Africa and London alongside Lisbon and Angola, giving as much importance to their influences from outside the *lusophone* world as within it.<sup>54</sup> The members of *Buraka Som Sistema* therefore exerted their own agency and globalising mission that had horizons beyond the Portuguese-speaking world. They also provided a pathway for future electronic dance music producers in Lisbon to get their music heard outside of their localised scenes.<sup>55</sup>

In the late-2000s and 2010s there was a proliferation of producers making *batida* beats in African-diaspora neighbourhoods around Lisbon.<sup>56</sup> However, it was the pioneering influence of DJ Nervoso and DJ Marfox that proved instrumental in formulating the next breakout sound from Lisbon. This sound was harsher than what had come before, stripping out the lyrics and bringing the percussion to the

forefront of the mix. Music journalist Ian McQuaid said that if the *kuduro* popularised by *Buraka Som Sistema* was disco, then what DJ Nervoso and DJ Marfox created was the *techno* response.<sup>57</sup> The harshness of the sound and racism against this preserved 'ghetto music' saw the burgeoning scene ostracised from clubs and bars in the city centre. Consequently, the music was left to develop in the housing projects on the edge of the city. This geographic isolation allowed the scene to develop its own distinct traits, including the naming convention of DJs ending their pseudonym 'fox', a quick mixing style and the use of cheaper production software such as *Fruity Loops*.<sup>58</sup> However, when a group of record shop workers and club-promoters, who would later form *Príncipe Records*, discovered the new sound emerging on the city's periphery they attempted to build a relationship with the scenes pioneers. Aware it would be problematic for a group of White club-promoters to swoop in and try and monetise a sound created by Black musicians, the *Príncipe Records*' crew attended parties and familiarised themselves with the scene for over two years before approaching DJ Nervoso and DJ Marfox to release their music.<sup>59</sup>

53 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'?", 131.

54 BURAKA, "OFF THE BEATEN TRACK."

55 Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical 'Lusofonia'?", 131-132.

56 Kate Hutchinson, "Nídia is Bringing the Sound of Lisbon's Ghettos to the World," *nytimes.com*, June 14, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/14/arts/music/nidia-batida-lisbon.html>.

57 Ian McQuaid, "Príncipe and the New Sound of Lisbon," *daily.bandcamp.com*, November 17, 2016. <https://daily.bandcamp.com/2016/11/17/principe-records-feature/>.

58 Keeling, "The Ghetto Sound of Lisbon."

59 McQuaid, "Príncipe and the New Sound of Lisbon" and Duncan Harrison, "Reflecting on Príncipe, The Portuguese Record Label That Put Lisbon's Ghetto Sound on the Map," *thump.vice.com*, August 13, 2015. <https://thump.vice.com/>

While this dynamic still exists, the success of *Príncipe's* monthly parties and the respectful relationship between label and artists shows the potential of music to bridge social, economic and geographical divides.<sup>60</sup> By bringing this music into Lisbon's centre, McQuaid argues music from Lisbon's poor immigrant and diaspora neighbourhoods was no longer "being ghettoised," but was instead being released and played alongside other acts in Lisbon's electronic music scene. This move "demanded the African artists and their Portuguese counterparts be treated with parity," and McQuaid contends, "it paid off."<sup>61</sup>

The scene and the communities it originated from still face severe issues of racism despite the success of artists such as DJ Nervoso and DJ Marfox who now regularly tour around the world.<sup>62</sup> As Lisbon rapper *Biggie* once told ethnomusicologist Derek Pardue, "maybe Portugal is in the EU, but the PALOP aren't. We're just in Portugal [children of PALOP migrants who are denied citizenship]... not quite Portuguese, not quite European... forever African and always Black."<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, DJ Marfox argues that today's rappers and producers in

Portugal serve a function similar to the protest singers of the Carnation Revolution. While "society looks down on me for being Black and doing *kuduro* music in the suburbs," he contends "the new Lisbon will be the periphery of the city, then they will be forced to acknowledge and represent us."<sup>64</sup> Gomes has also picked up on a change whereby people are now less scared to venture into Lisbon's African-diaspora neighbourhoods. By seeing more Black faces from the music scene in clubs and in the press, people are more willing to interact and less fearful of being robbed.<sup>65</sup> Music journalist Duncan Harrison goes further and argues that there has been "a genuine socio-political significance to what *Príncipe* have achieved." They have "amplified the voices of those from an isolated area and immersed those voices with the inner-city populace."<sup>66</sup> Like *Buraka Som Sistema*, Gomes argues *Príncipe's* success comes from the label's international appeal. This music "can work in Africa... this can work in all of Latin and North America, in Asia and, of course, in Europe." Gomes makes a similar narrative argument to that assumed by *musical lusofonia* when he told Ryan Keeling that "this music has been brewing for centuries, through the slave trade, through immigration, and now through digital

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en\_uk/article/53agj3/reflecting-on-principe-the-portuguese-record-label-that-put-lisbons-ghetto-sound-on-the-map.

60 Keeling, "The Ghetto Sound of Lisbon."

61 McQuaid, "Príncipe and the New Sound of Lisbon."

62 Andy Beta, "Lisbon's Batida Revolution," *pitchfork.com*, August 29, 2014. <https://pitchfork.com/features/electric-fling/9490-lisbons-batida-revolution/>.

63 Pardue, *Cape Verde, Let's Go*, 156.

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64 Beta, "Lisbon's Batida Revolution."

65 McQuaid, "Príncipe and the New Sound of Lisbon" and Félix and Pinto, "Can music reduce anti-dark-skin prejudice?," 388.

66 Harrison, "Reflecting on Príncipe."

technology.”<sup>67</sup> However, unlike at *Expo '98* and previous expressions of *musical lusofonia*, *Príncipe* gives clear authorship to the African-diaspora musicians that created the sound, not malign Portuguese cultural and colonial legacy.<sup>68</sup> Most of the musicians themselves do not identify themselves as *lusophone* musicians, nor does the term play a role in their creative process. The only relevance most artists find in *musical lusofonia* is the potential to get their music into city centre venues and disseminate their music further with institutional support.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, labels like *Príncipe* prove artists and promoters have their own agency and can forward their own objectives in an internet age.

## CONCLUSION

African-diaspora musicians in Lisbon still have to act within the structural confines of their position in postcolonial Portugal, one often characterised by poverty and intolerance. However, it has not been the official attempts to promote *lusophone* culture that has changed global perception of Lisbon, but principally the work of the musicians themselves. It should be noted that hip hop when adopted in Lisbon's African-diaspora communities also

had a big impact on the musical landscape of the city.<sup>70</sup> A group of mostly young men of Cape Verdean descent since the 1990s have drawn attention to the plight of people in their communities, by using lyrics spoken and rapped in creole.<sup>71</sup> Pardue argues that the existence of creole hip hop, performed by PALOP and Cape Verdean diaspora MCs, has changed postcolonial discourses around multiculturalism in Portugal as these musicians assert their voice in a language historically refused official recognition.<sup>72</sup> Whether it is hip hop or *batida* therefore, the power of African-diaspora music has changed Portuguese national identity as their voices can no longer be ignored. While the racial, social and economic inequalities of colonialism still permeate in postcolonial Portuguese society, music has created new egalitarian and multicultural urban spaces in which these differences can be addressed. Laura Filipa Vidal, director of the CPLP and EU supported *Festival Conexão Lusófona*, contends that “Portuguese colonialism happened, whether for good or bad, and we must recognize that a mixture has taken place.” We therefore “have to work positively

67 Keeling, “The Ghetto Sound of Lisbon.”

68 Hutchinson, “Nídia is Bringing the Sound of Lisbon's Ghettos to the World.”

69 Alge, “Lusofonia, a (R)Evolução” and Vanspauwen, “The (R)Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon,” 60-66 and 70-74.

70 Pardue, *Cape Verde, Let's Go*, 17, Derek Pardue, “Cape Verdean Creole and the Politics of Scene-Making in Lisbon, Portugal,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 22, no. 2 (2012): 42-46, Federica Lupati, “Voices from the Periphery? The Polyphony of Hip Hop and the Portuguese Community,” *Cultural and Religious Studies* 4, no. 12 (2016): 727 and Vanspauwen, “The (R) Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon,” 42.

71 Pardue, “Cape Verdean Creole and the Politics of Scene-Making in Lisbon,” 42-43.

72 Pardue, *Cape Verde, Let's Go*, 156.



on this legacy towards the future.”<sup>73</sup> Latent neo-imperial discourses still permeate in the mainstream, but a study of Lisbon’s *batida* scene illustrates artists are successfully challenging this and improving community relations within Lisbon. As the interval performance at *Eurovision 2018* demonstrated, music can fill a gap in representation of diaspora communities in Portugal, and by extension, possibly across other multicultural European countries dealing with their own legacies of colonialism.<sup>74</sup>

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73 Barre and Vanspauwen, “A Musical ‘Lusofonia?’,” 137.

74 Vanspauwen, “The (R)Evolution of Lusophone Musics in the City of Lisbon,” 2-3.