CHAPTER 11

Sound Praxis: Music, Politics, and Violence in Brazil

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This essay addresses social conflict and its relationships to socially produced sound formations from the perspective of ongoing research projects being conducted in marginalized areas of Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by the theoretical and methodological formulations of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in particular and by "participatory action research" more generally, teams of university-based ethnomusicology students and teachers have been working dialogically with groups of residents from these communities. These residents participate actively as coresearchers. Their goal is to produce knowledge about different meanings articulated by the musical practices in marginalized and violence-ridden areas of Rio. By discussing issues such as the political dimension of sound praxis, the epistemological relevance of participatory and dialogic research, and the new roles that community-conceived sound archives can play in social transformation, we seek to offer alternative perspectives for knowledge building, perspectives in which distinctions between "theoretical" and "applied" research are reconsidered from new epistemological positions.

On Violence, Conflict, and Sound Praxis: Conceptual Premises

Sounds of violence in the contemporary world are too many and too loud not to be considered carefully by scholars in the humanities. They constantly define the extreme contours of a hardly audible daily struggle that deceptively appears in people's lives, as if it had less to do with socially orchestrated power than with individual physical survival and emotional integrity. Here and there, violence, be it in the form of massive discharges of hopeless rage or the subtle, silent, and apparently innocuous interference of banal facts, is evident both as a daily personal management tool and as a commodity in the market of individualistic indifference and despair. Within this context, a research team affiliated with the Ethnomusicology Lab of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro has faced since 2003 the challenge of carrying out interdisciplinary studies of sound and meaning.

The team's conceptual point of departure has been to recognize the multiple forms of violence and conflict: cultural, symbolic, political, economic, social, ethnic, domestic, neocolonial, and so on. Only recently has attention been given, at least in anthropology and related disciplines such as ethnomusicology, to cultural or symbolic forms of violence that pervade and (dis)orient more lastingly the daily lives of common people, even those not directly involved in extreme conflicts.[1] As theorized respectively by authors such as Marx and Engels ([1846] 2007), Gramsci ([1975] 2000), and Bourdieu ([1997] 2001), among others, the symbolic forms of violence more often appear as socially conceived categories (and music is one rich area in which to investigate them) that are naturalized and put into action in complex ways.

Second, as has been painfully undertaken in the social sciences, scholarly attention has been directed to the relevance of examining society and culture as sites of disorder and conflict (see Balandier 1997), a view that has challenged the very foundations of disciplines that have long been occupied with internal laws or rules of conduct. These disciplines tend to represent violence as pathology or as a detour from an idealized, orderly social world. As we noted in previous studies (see Araújo et al. 2006a), conceiving society as springing from an intrinsic tendency to order seems coherent with natural-law principles forged during the eighteenth century in Central Europe.[2] To expose even further the dramatic conceptual turn in the social sciences during the twentieth century, the same article calls attention to the anthropologist Pierre Clastres's predicament: knowing violence badly is to know society badly (ibid., 295).

A third key consideration in the perspective developed in our projects has been to embed the contextual analysis of particular forms of violence in macro conditionings embracing the political, the historical, and the ideological realms both at a local and a global level. Without this consideration, the notion of context itself would remain useless except as an impressionistic picture of impressive actions, events, and relationships. These in turn quite often lead to theoretical dead ends and/or to idealizations of "nonviolent" social forms that are in fact as problematic as the "violent" ones they supposedly will replace. The latter impression can be clearly observed today in Brazil, as reflected in a growing number of academic, literary, and also audiovisual, and para-academic sources.[3] These draw rather impressionistic pictures of spectacular forms of violence and/or attempt to project solutions or attenuation measures based on "art and culture" teaching and access programs. Critical appraisals of this perspective have been based on contemporary Western political philosophies that emphasize academic standards of distancing, neutrality, and objectivity (see Bobbio 2000). However, both stances seem to have failed to produce concrete alternatives to violence in its extreme forms, since one relies on idealized solutions that ignore long-standing and macrostructural circumstances, while the other does not recog-

nize the human ability through agency to surpass and even subvert the macro conditionings it identifies.

This has resulted in a paralyzing and dangerous tautology leading us to our last and perhaps more provocative conceptual argument, which revolves around the following ideas: (1) This tautology might be surpassed only by grasping violence as structurally central to social forms. Here violence is understood as a concept to be theorized, and not as an a priori denial of order or as a rule-breaking exception within society. (2) This position may require acknowledging positive meanings in certain kinds of violence, even when they seem to (and particularly when they do) threaten the world order as we know it.[4] (3) Academic research that attaches significance to this conjuncture will have to change profoundly. At the expense of risking scholarly status, academics will need to question the supposedly neutral premises of their discipline and allow more space for contestation especially by other knowledge-building communities.

We have taken up these challenges in our research. First, we attributed to favela residents the formulation, from the outset, of basic research themes, issues, and even methods.[5] This required academics on the project to engage in new roles and to act as mediators between the experience and knowledge of favela residents and the academic training these residents have been socially denied; the intention was to bridge a two-way form of violence that is hardly recognized as such: "local" knowledge and "external" knowledge. In the former, "local" knowledge is produced to meet the immediate needs of residents. It is demeaned in a noncritical manner as social power vis-à-vis socially legitimized "external" knowledge that is supposed to transcend the immediacy of particular situations.

Within this perspective, our research engages a long-standing philosophical tradition that considers theory and practice anchored in each other, as praxis. We think of it in the sense of a reflexive manipulation of both natural and social phenomena, from their empirical manifestations and perception up to their practical effects and the critical discourses produced through these processes. This perspective is also aimed at transcending associations, even if flexible, with the category "music" or with others that correspond to it, since we seek to deal with a totality that, first, strategically focuses on the sonic aspects of human activity, without isolating them from their political dimension, that is, action that proposes alliances, mediations, and ruptures; and that, second, integrates what often appears as dichotomous or even contradictory categories of knowledge on sound in the academic milieu (theory and practice, sound and meaning, order and disorder, etc.). Highlighting sound praxis as an operative category also means to emphasize the articulation between discourses, actions, and policies concerning sound, as it appears, quite often subtly or unnoticeably, in the daily experience of individuals, that is, for professional and amateur musicians, cultural agents, entrepreneurs, and legislators, among others; for groups such as musicians'

collectives and organized audiences; and for institutions such as school systems, corporations, labor unions, and both governmental and nongovernmental policy agencies. In our study's case, it must be examined against the backdrop of state-centered politics and power struggles in contemporary Brazil.

Reconsidering Sound Praxis in Ethnomusicology

The interaction between the needs of academics and those of the researched community has occupied a narrow, but unquestionably growing, space in ethnomusicological literature and practice. Several factors have made this issue increasingly visible. These include the anthropological critique of ethnographic practice as an instrument of neocolonial domination within the current context of world political economy. In this category, problems posed or reawakened by the so-called postmodern anthropology (such as the crises of representation or of ethnographic authority) are considered. Again the assimilation of research techniques (sometimes learned from academic researchers) by carriers of cultural traditions is another issue. These culture bearers articulate scholarship and creation in order to maintain control of the reproduction or reinvention of their respective worldviews. Thus the case studies presented in the literature may perhaps be roughly subdivided into two main tendencies:

First are the collaborative efforts developed by academic researchers and/or researched community members seeking to recover and preserve the memory of tradition. These efforts are made viable through access to archives and collections housed outside the community. They involve oral history, iconographic and phonographic storage, visual or audiovisual records, the formation of musical groups, educational projects, and so on. Second is the creation of community teaching and research institutions, as well as databases maintained by the communities, with or without partnerships with governmental or third sector institutions. A common element in all these situations has been the relative distance from research models defined exclusively or at least ultimately by the outside researcher (see Ellis 1994), an epistemological turn toward perspectives in which community control over the generated knowledge is always at stake. However, this approach is not always congruent with mainstream academic discussions.

In fact, ethnomusicology has always been punctuated by collaboration between researchers or academic institutions and musical communities in specific projects of interest to those communities, such as commercial recordings and public presentations in new contexts. As short-term experiences, such activities have usually depended on the establishment of collective trust in the researcher, quite often stemming from a previous longer-term project with goals defined by the researcher himself (frequently a thesis). The second type of situation mentioned above, however, may require that the ethnomusicologist be involved for an unpredictable period of time as well as risk raising issues not welcomed in

the academic sphere. It is redundant to say this may easily jeopardize a research career evaluated by criteria such as number of publications and a production that may be judged by standard professional rules.

Collaborations between the Academy and the Community

Undoubtedly much potential and many obstacles are involved in research on sound praxis based on the dialogic collaboration between academia and community organizations. This research should be centered on the reflexive action of members of the researched social context, while the "foreign ethnographer" should play the role of mediator. This collaboration should engage subjects directly affected by many forms of violence in reflecting critically on their daily experiences and conceiving proactive alternatives to preserve social inclusion in the world. Such potential, as we argue, may not only come to terms with problems in research ethics, "returning" concrete contributions to the researched social bodies (in the manner of so-called applied or public-sector ethnomusicology). It also builds significant epistemological bridges between "local" and "foreign" analytical perspectives toward a renewed concept of citizenship.

Addressing the field of ethnomusicology in view of new epistemological scenarios emerging from postcolonial situations requires that old roles played during research (insider/outsider, engaged native/neutral foreign observer) be carefully reconsidered and replaced by new, more politically articulate ones. It also affects the field's theory and practice in the contemporary world. It reflects not only the critique of modernity's illusions about the supposedly neutral character of the human sciences but also the limitations of postmodern criticisms of the latter. As argued here, and despite their good intentions, such criticisms have fallen short of effectively theorizing, not to speak of counteracting, the asymmetrical power between knowledge-producing, though politically disempowered, communities and a world largely shaped by commodity forms, some of which materialized in the authority of certain academic discourses.

Although these issues have been raised in a growing literature on seemingly marginal subareas designated "applied," collaborative, and participatory research in ethnomusicology, we refrain from using any of these terms to qualify my object; that is the sociopolitical implications of face-to-face sound praxis research.[6] In our view, even those who believe in "pure" or "neutral" research are opening, intentionally or not, ways of application in and through their work. Triggering such categories of distinction is a matter of degree and not really of substance.

Simultaneously we highlight the political substance and the epistemological consequences of new research contexts and roles as one area with potentially groundbreaking contributions to the emergence of a more balanced social world. In this world, knowledge will hopefully emerge from a truly horizontal intercultural dialogue and not through top-down neocolonial systems of validation.

This choice, in turn, is strongly rooted in personal experience in coordinating (Samuel Araújo) an academic unit that has maintained a four-year collaboration with a community organization in Rio de Janeiro. In this project, we attempt to devise forms of community self-empowerment and counterhegemonic forms of organization through music research on local social memory and sociability. During this thus far stable collaboration, our joint research team has experienced moments of high hopes in a new type of music (or ethnomusicological) research, despite the enormous challenges it may face under mostly adverse conditions.

Sound Praxis, Violence, and Politics: A Case Study

The research highlighted here focuses on sound praxis in and around Maré, a marginalized residential area of Rio de Janeiro, not far from downtown. It is classified in everyday discourse as a favela, hence the designation Complexo da Maré, a term all too often employed in the police pages of local newspapers when reporting drug traffic–related violence. About 132,000 people live in Maré. Simultaneously, they have to outlive the harsh reality of socially orchestrated violence as well as century-old social prejudice and stereotypes associated with the estimated six hundred marginalized areas labeled favela.

As reported elsewhere (Araújo et al. 2006a, 2006b), the Ethnomusicology Lab of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro has established, since 2003, a partnership with CEASM (Center for the Study and Solidarity Actions of Maré), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) created by residents within a sociopolitically disenfranchised area of Rio de Janeiro. With an estimated population of about 135,000 people, Maré is home to relocated slum dwellers and unskilled migrant labor. The majority of these laborers are from northeastern Brazil. The population also includes about 1,000 Angolan young students and middle-aged war refugees. High rates of unemployment and the profitability of drug trafficking delineate the broader social contours of the Maré area. These activities lead to a harsh routine of police raids, corruption, drug wars on territories between factions, and traffic-dictated curfews.

Our partner organization was, by 2003, one of the most visible community-based NGOs in Rio. It had a considerable infrastructure that included classrooms, well-equipped administrative offices, computer rooms, a library, and access to various types of databases. It devoted its attention to the preparation of Maré's youngsters for the yearly admission exam to public universities (reputedly the best in Brazil and free of charge). Its main objectives require that the acquisition of exam-centered skills be complemented by other skills that enrich the experience of youngsters. These were the intentions of its representatives, for the most part middle-aged, university-trained residents or former residents of Maré. The

expectation of CEASM in our joint project was that the training of local youngsters in the documentation of Maré's musical output would eventually lead to the creation of a local music-documentation center. It was hoped that this might reinforce the self-esteem of the students through their experience of music or related areas such as dance, history, and storytelling.

At this point, it is necessary to briefly contextualize Maré. In spite of being considered a favela in the social imaginary of its encompassing city, and of continuing to represent a marginalized area of the state capital, Rio de Janeiro, it has been officially accorded, since 1994, the status of a neighborhood (*bairro*). An issue emerges, however, if one compares the socioeconomic profile of this neighborhood with those of similar political units of the city. According to a local census (Censo Maré) carried out by CEASM in partnership with the federal government institute IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) in 2000, Maré had 132,176 inhabitants. It had an average per capita monthly income of R$394 (about U$200). By comparison, a neighborhood like Copacabana, which is in the wealthiest area of the city, the Zona Sul, had 147,021 inhabitants (only 14,845 more than Maré) with an average monthly per capita income of R$1,761 (about U$900) (CEASM 2003).

The communities that constitute this favela reflect different housing policies applied by the successive political parties in charge of the city. These involved the "removal" of people from the favelas located in the wealthy areas of the city and from the well-known Centers for Temporary Housing (CHP) built during the 1960s and 1970s. Simultaneously these communities reflect the strategies of a poor population looking for a place to live that has no time to wait for governmental solutions (Rede Memória 2000; Jacques 2002). Located between three of the main express highways of the city, these communities now represent a stage for successful cultural and educational experiences carried out with governmental or nongovernmental sponsorship. At the same time, this neighborhood is very well known for the violations perpetrated by groups of local drug traffickers and the violence committed by the police. For these reasons, Maré regularly appears in the crime sections of the newspapers. This negative impression is magnified through the lenses of media stereotyping and by social prejudice. In the decades following the 1970s, with increased occupation, what many today consider today to be the initial nucleus of the neighborhood was established. Individuals and families coming from different parts of the city participated in its construction. This influx developed mainly as a consequence of the policies established by the government of the former State of Guanabara. These policies involved the relocation of migrants to Maré from the interior of the State of Rio and from various other states in the northeastern region such as Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo (Andrade 1994; Rede Memória 2000).

The Project: Music, Memory, and Sociability in Maré

A first version of the project was outlined by a university-based team that included a senior researcher, a former graduate student, and two students at the time enrolled in the university's graduate program in music. The project was guided by the following elements: (1) We relied on positive feedback (in ethical and epistemological terms) from small-scale experiences in alternative modes of ethnography. Here, the research focus was jointly defined by university researchers and members of the societal groups being studied. These subjects were also involved in several stages of the research proper, in roles as interviewers, fieldworkers, translators of local linguistic variations, and so on. (2) We emphasized the availability of locally based musical resources. (3) We drew on our collective accumulation of considerable experience in the subfields termed "applied," "advocacy," or "participatory" within the social sciences, including ethnomusicology (see, for example, Ellis 1994; Impey 2002). We recognized the availability of an increasing body of relevant literature. (4) We acquired institutional support from the university and from some of its business partners (such as the giant state-owned oil company). All this occurred within a political context of the increased awareness of the social, political, and economic imbalance between the very rich and the poor in Brazil. (This situation led to the election of an industrial worker to the office of president for the first time in the Americas in 2003.)

Intense discussions with NGO representatives (such as educators, historians, and administrative personnel) led to the development of a one-year research project restricted to two subareas of Maré. Following participatory action models, particularly the one proposed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the project has emphasized dialogic knowledge building in which "foreign actors" mediate conversations between "local actors" about the knowledge that informs their daily lives. A basic distinction underlies Freire's approach to this issue. On the one hand, the student remains the self-conscious subject of the cognitive operations, making possible the emergence of liberating knowledge. Here the teacher acts as a mediator in the process. On the other hand, Freire recognized an alternative didactic pathway where a student remains primarily the object of a teacher's knowledge transference; knowledge produced by a distant Other, in many cases foreign or even hostile to the student's cognitive backgrounds (Freire 1970, 1996). He coined the term *banking education* for this pathway. For us, this process involved three basic stages: The first stage consisted of twice-a-week encounters with a group of twenty Maré-resident youngsters selected from high school student volunteers. It sought to develop a conceptual basis as well as research focuses and tools. In the encounters, the university researchers mediated discussions between the youngsters on relevant musical subjects and categories for music research. The second stage entailed the audio and audiovisual documentation of musical practices and interviews with musically representative individuals, from musicians to cultural

brokers. The third stage involved the construction of a public database within Maré that was located at the NGO headquarters. It included the development of outreach programs aimed at Maré's residents and at the general public. During each of these phases, we considered questions concerning the range and type of diffusion.

Once all participants had assimilated the basic research principles, both residents and external mediators worked as a team in documenting local musical practices. This activity fed into a locally based public access center for documentation where the recordings were deposited and made available and where public presentations concerning the documentation were made and the questions they raised considered. It is worth noting that, in one of the country's largest and more important universities, concurrently developing many other outreach initiatives, this is the only outreach project in which nonacademics are engaged in relevant research activities that interrogate the key issues of violence, citizenship, and hegemonic politics.

During the four months of debates on the project design (which were always held in the NGO's main building at Maré), the university participants could also meet other local activists and other residents. They could watch video documentation previously made by residents and visit other facilities maintained by the same organization in the surrounding area. This enabled them to learn gradually about the educational programs developed by CEASM. Amid the dismantling of public education in the country (at both the state and the city level), about 36 percent of the school-age population in Maré has dropped out of school, representing the highest dropout rate in Rio de Janeiro.

Among many initial impressions, one immediately caught the attention of the university team. The team's first interlocutors were local leaders who had created a pioneering institution to compensate for the state's absence. The local leadership had to work against all odds, especially against the violence stemming from drug wars and against the low self-esteem of a stigmatized population. Although they recognized vestiges of significant musical activity in Maré, they were skeptical at first, hardly finding Maré an interesting topic for music research. As soon as the local team of project participants was assembled, this ambivalence to our research aims was clearly a factor that inhibited public dialogue in the initial meetings. This situation was exacerbated by the failure of university mediators to teach or even to present any a priori definitions or techniques. They tried, on the contrary, to allow for the development of informal conversations on issues that seemed distant from "music," a strategy that showed unique links with an even more diversified spectrum of sound practices than was initially imagined.[7] Obviously the social differences among participants were perceivable and deployed as crucial tools in the difficult communication process at the beginning stages of the new experience.

Although the local leadership's cooperative attitude toward the university was in principle positive, it is worth noting that this association did not prevent a few

leaders from demonstrating (even to this day) concerns over the foundations of the Freirean approach, which grants great autonomy to youngsters regarding the formulation of problems and the design of their own responses to them. This may seem to contradict the respect and admiration the same people show toward Freire both as a man and as a scholar. However, it is consistent with the organization's concern for quantifiable and practical results in their main educational drive: the preparation of the local high school graduates to take the highly competitive university entrance exams. This goal becomes even more important when one takes into account that the tougher exams are those that admit students to the public universities, not only the best academic alternatives but the only universities that are free of charge. The annual admission statistics, in turn, become a touchstone in the negotiation of both public and private financial support to the NGO. This goal exerted a continuous and extremely high pressure on teachers and students alike.

In other words, when adopting a research praxis that assumes it is impossible "to interpret" reality without political engagement, one works amid contradictory movements, under the hegemonic perspective of the continuous and pseudocritical justification of a given social order (see Bobbio 2000). Often, as in the case being discussed, it is the same social actors who label this order unjust and endorse symbols of its eventual subversion, as in Paulo Freire's pedagogy or their allegiance to the Workers' Party.

The research group (and I am referring not only to the young residents but also, and perhaps mainly, to nonresident participants) had to neutralize—but obviously without managing to overcome completely—the invisible and perverse obstacles of symbolic violence, which included the persistence of strong conditioning leading to a hierarchical relationship between owners and nonowners of knowledge (that is, university students and high school students). These obstacles also included the group's difficulties conceiving the longer-term objectives of the project as anything meaningful or useful, even when taking into account those objectives that have always been collectively and progressively constructed. These objectives were not seen as (and in fact they are not) immediate means toward professionalization or, even less, as means toward an academic career. Finally, the project entailed difficulties with basic concepts and techniques, both reflective of a nonexistent public education system and the absence, for reasons anticipated in the project design, of family support networks. These networks were too fragile to contend with the meager resources and the adversities undermining family structures, which included state and drug-related violence, a precarious health-care system, and the symbolic and physical destruction of the public school system.

This situation, however, is not unique to Brazil. In a recent article on the linguistic universe of Spanish workers who are most likely to be or become unemployed (especially youngsters looking for their first job), sociologist Ana Maria Rivas Rivas stresses significant distinctions between the social experience and

the linguistic practices of different generations. On the one hand, members of the older generations more frequently deploy concepts based on ideologies of job stability, working-class solidarity, and professional or political struggles. On the other hand, they employ contrasting notions stemming from neoliberal ideologies of an individualistic and fatalist character, similar to what we have often found in our collaborative experience in Maré: "Their narratives lack key concepts through which other generations, including that of their parents, and the majority of industry and construction workers, built up their labor experiences: solidarity, justice, equality, workers' struggle, and activism, replaced by other terms such as success, failure, formation, luck, fortune" (Rivas Rivas 2005, 15).

This is not substantially different from what Paulo Freire, more than four decades earlier, had conceived as the linguistic experience of the oppressed, between what he termed "significant silence" and the imposition of categories formulated under the world of the workers' alienation, those of obedience and subordination to the commodity form.

Our university team has been aware from the beginning that to break away from these premises would be an almost impossible task. We reached this conclusion despite the different participative strategies we have employed, involving continuous mediation over a relatively long period that was often frustrated by generalized physical and conceptual violence that was discharged daily on the populations marginalized by the "net benefits" of virtual capitalism. Perhaps the only sign that we have not failed entirely is the fact that we have managed to remain alive and to meet at least since 2003 twice a week to consider our dilemmas through sound praxis.

This effort has produced reflections presented in local spaces and in political and academic forums. In the latter category, we wrote two publications (Araújo et al. 2006a, 2006b) seeking to define and emphasize the importance of violence as a concept, and not merely as a descriptive category, in research into sound praxis as a central dimension of social relations and by extension of power and politics. In the first article (Araújo et al. 2006a), we discuss the implications of diverse forms of violence ranging from the ideological to the lethal. We also consider processes of recognition and discursive elaboration in sound practices including those categorized as "music." In the second article (Araújo et al. 2006b), which is a modified version of the first, residents of Maré analyze public policies directed toward marginalized youth. They criticize the elitist design of these policies, which assume that the cultural backgrounds of their targeted public are devoid of any meaning. By extension, they usually attempt to compensate for their "exclusion" from the benefits of wealth accumulation.

When questioning both the content and the results of such policies, Maré's residents have attempted simultaneously to think and to constitute, as an alternative sound praxis, ways of counteracting their more degrading and long-lasting violence. Obviously, nothing can address the effectiveness of the policies consid-

ered here since they are only a fulfillment of expectations of social elevation under alienating circumstances. Much less could we claim to threaten the status quo. It is in its denial—as proposed originally by the philosophy of praxis—that one finds the ultimate evaluation of criteria. And here we confront a concrete puzzle since this denial may not succeed if it discards the use of violence. In other words, the widely held notion of mediation toward conflict resolution, often implied in participatory action research initiatives and even in many uses of Paulo Freire's work in similar directions (something that Freire himself has never suggested), may blatantly contradict macro sociopolitical constraints against social change. This has been a crucial consideration for our joint project since it makes clear that a certain degree of violence, even if only symbolic, must always be felt in order to assure that the old social order is being replaced by a new one. In the next section, we hope to clarify this point further by dealing with two key aspects of our work: collective engagement in archiving and writing.

Sound Archives and Collective Praxis

A public-access community archive was constructed at Maré primarily to maintain a collection of items that were the products of its residents' research questions. These were organically linked to their worldviews and research experience in their research collective. One of the archive's primary goals is to provide feedback on the collective discussions as well as to deliver collectively prepared public presentations within and outside the community. As the work progressed, the first presentations were made in our partner NGO's dependencies and in academic symposia. The project's academic coordinator was also invited to submit essays about the research for publication in books and journals in ethnomusicology and related fields. An individually signed piece was undoubtedly an option. However, we came to conclude that this would have hindered the greatest achievement of the project: to show that original perspectives could be gained from engaging with the community in researching itself and that these perspectives would ensure new attitudes and actions toward social reality. This realization led to a new development concerning the production of collective texts, of which this essay is just one example.

When the question of what should constitute a "sound archive" arose, we drew on our own experiences of engaging in dialogues in our homes and within the community and on works on ethnomusicological archives, particularly those referring to community-built archives (see, for example, Layne 2004). This led us to conclude that, beyond the entire set of sound documents we had gathered in this process, the archive should also include elements that were indirectly or not obviously related to sound. Accordingly, our archive is made up of our own audio and audiovisual documentation and resident-donated collections of both commercial and noncommercial audio and video recordings stored in various

types of media carriers such as MD, CD, and DVD. It includes a newspaper library, a small library with academic books and articles, and the questionnaires we administered in 2006 (currently in the final stages of analysis). It also comprises articles and other edited materials produced by the group itself. Many of these items have been acquired through donations made by community members, the same members who are their potential users.

The archive is constantly growing, thanks to the group's original contributions of new documentation, collections of primary data, and various types of research products (such as papers, videos, slide presentations, etc.). We have thus built an archive that is critical, social, and human, because we try to portray life through music and sound. It documents everyday facts and the everyday lives of common people through materials that would not be of interest to traditional archives but which are of crucial importance in building self-esteem and fostering support for action within the community. How, one might ask, is an archive such as ours conceived, one in which the researchers are also "researched"? It is one in which the humanity of the archive is also organically expressed through the researchers' life experiences, since they are part of the reality under study. It can be considered "critical" because its creation is the result of a constant dialogue among the members of the group. It is social, since its members are militants seeking to improve their social milieu, and in doing so they begin to reflect not only on the status and signs of social violence or how to contain its more dramatic effects but also on its socially orchestrated conditionings and the means of effectively overcoming them.

An ethnomusicological archive is thus also an attempt to understand music and sound as reality, as a dimension where reality is constructed, reflected, or commented upon. We must listen to, read, or watch the documents we collected through our research, attributing to them the same importance that is given to any other historical document. The most important goal of our work is to foster, by means of dialogue, the reflection of our community upon itself. During the organization of this archive, various issues arose about the kind of access it should grant to the general public. Wider access could, for example, be achieved through integration with the public schools of the neighborhood, as a kind of traveling museum. It could also be achieved through guided tours of the archive presented by members of the group.

It is important to note, however, that the workings of the group (especially with regard to the subjects of study and the methods employed) are not always conducted in a harmonious manner. In fact, the decision-making process is challenging since it is not easy to satisfy the individual wishes of such a large group.

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The main purpose of this essay is to raise issues concerning the articulation of sound praxis, violence, and politics, referenced in a collaborative research project in Rio de Janeiro. The essay, as well as the research that informs it, attempts

to develop a research praxis that, contrary to perspectives that consciously or not are limited to the interrogation or explanation of the contemporary social drama in Brazil, risks rehearsing collectively a nonutopian future transformed by solid social relations of a new kind developed in and through research on sound praxis.

In the guise of a conclusion, and as a provocation to debate, we argue that it is imperative to scrutinize more carefully forms of musical research still based on the modes of "conventional" ethnography conducted in the colonial world, or even those of the so-called reflexive work done in the postcolonial context. This questionable legacy, which entails legitimizing the discourse of academic interpreters while reducing the power of people to resist their transformation into objects of study, has resulted in the fetishization of musical products and processes. These are defined and naturalized in terms of ideologies that are usually foreign to the focused communities. It has also resulted in a slight reconfiguration of academic authority without challenging standards of authorship/ownership. Further, our argument criticizes public policies (concerning world and national heritages, research agendas, training programs, etc.) that stress the hegemony of academia, attributing to its agents (that is, researchers) the responsibility of defining, preserving, and promoting musical diversity (see, for instance, Gonçalves 1996).

As many of our colleagues already know, building a contrasting legacy constitutes an enormous challenge. Invoking Paulo Freire once again, researchers keep themselves aware that musical processes and musical products are permanently mediated by power relations that demand constant action/reflection. They do not allow for stable theorizations in the course of part-time interactions aimed at individual authorships in search of academic authority.

Concomitantly, radically reviewing the process of knowledge production requires extreme application (in the sense of politically conscious engagement) in order to change public policies in favor of social movements that can build a new knowledge-producing praxis. As already implemented here and there around the globe, this praxis will require the creation of opportunities to enable communities currently marginalized from the knowledge produced about them to interact with and participate as active interlocutors in world forums. It will necessitate the formation of newly designed research teams able to question knowledge hierarchies. It will involve new forms of self-criticism in the use of musical documentation, fostering public debates on the history, identity, and values of peoples. It will entail the development of new capacities for communities previously deprived of access to those capacities, which include audiovisual documentation, the idealization and management of sound archives, the use of technologies, and so forth. Finally, it will require the reinforcement and/or the building of centers for the dissemination of local knowledge through community-based organizations and institutions.

Notes

Grupo Musicultura is a research group formed by residents of the Maré community in Rio de Janeiro. This essay has been coauthored by Alex Isidoro Blanc, Alexandre Dias da Silva, Bruno Carvalho Reis, Érika Ramos da Silva, Jaqueline Souza de Andrade, Fernanda Santiago França, Geandra Nobre do Nascimento, Guaraciara Gonçalves, Humberto Salustriano da Silva, Mariane Zilda Bello Gaspar, Mariluci Correia do Nascimento, Mario Rezende Travassos do Carmo, Monique Pureza, Sibele Dias Mesquita, Sinésio Jefferson Andrade Silva, and Suelen Cristina de Brito. The above Musicultura members thank Vincenzo Cambria for the translation into English of their joint contribution to this essay.

1. A very significant contribution is the collective work organized by Ana Maria Ochoa (2006a, 2006b) for the online periodical *Trans: Transcultural Music Review*.

2. Here we invoke the seminal definition of sociability given by Samuel Puffendorf (in 1672) as "a man-to-man disposition, thanks to which each one considers himself linked to the other through goodness, peace, and charity" (quoted in Abbagnano 1998, 913).

3. By para-academic, I am referring to both occasional collaborations between academics and nonacademics, with the former usually providing a scholarly, reflexive perspective and the latter a "factual" field report (see, for example, Soares, Bill, and Athayde 2005), or to openly nonacademic accounts that nonetheless conform to expectations and appeals to "nonviolence," "good sense," "civilization," and so on.

4. Acknowledging such positive meanings of violence requires scrutinizing carefully public calls for "equilibrium" and "gradual moves" in political situations favoring more radical social change, calls that quite often invoke the "horrors" of a projected socioeconomic disorder and ultimately stall effective change and reproduce the existing social disparities.

5. *Favela* was the name given to one specific nineteenth-century settlement on a Rio de Janeiro hillside. It was founded by impoverished soldiers who had fought in the Bahia uprising known as the Canudos War. Since then, it has become a generalized term designating other communities of poor residents in Rio and throughout Brazil.

6. The term *applied* was adopted in the 39th ICTM World Conference (2007). It arose from a double session at the conference that resulted in a study group on applied ethnomusicology being proposed and finally created. I thank Svanibor Pettan, panel co-organizer, and fellow panel members Sooi Beng Tan, Patricia Opondo, Maureen Loughran, and Jennifer Newsome for the fruitful cross-cultural perspectives on our mutually distinct cases and approaches.

7. The questions asked by the mediators were disconcerting: What do you listen to? What do you choose to listen to? What sounds do you hear at home every day? Does everyone in your home listen to the same things? Could you make a list of sounds you listen to at home or in its surroundings? How would you organize such a list?