

The happy suburb of “pagode carioca”*

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Abstract

Samba and *pagode* are musical practices that deal frequently with the idea of happiness. Through the tambourine beat and other instruments that shape its characteristic sound, the imagination of a certain popular culture evokes in a positive way the lifestyle of popular classes, through a narrative of joy, community meetings and happiness. From a bibliographical research and an analysis of repertory related to what we classify as *pagode carioca*, a hegemonic samba style that achieved a high cultural circulation in music market since the mid-1990s, we try to understand how this contemporary musical production consolidates the construction and reaffirmation of a “popular” stereotype, linked to the valuation of certain peripheral geographical areas (the hill, the slum suburb) and to a project of happiness of the popular classes.

Keywords: Popular music. Popular culture. *Samba*. *Pagode*. Happiness.

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Introduction

In published text in the book *Ser feliz hoje (To be happy today)*, the psycho analyst Joel Birman describes with details that he calls “imperative of the happiness” in the contemporary society, but excludes the popular classes of this imperative. He says, “The middle-class and the elite are the targets and the social agents of the happiness project that weaves today. The popular classes do not sign up themselves in this project so they are not here in focus” (BIRMAN, 2010, p.27).

Our goal here is to build a counterpoint to this argument, covering musical narratives through the samba and pagode who claims that there is a happiness project that is associated to the “lower classes” and materializes musically in certain sounds and ideas, establishing ways to absorb and process the powerful idea of “happiness”, even outside the middle class and elite environments. As a basic methodology, in addition to bibliographic research, we undertook an analysis of musical repertoire, which also includes the collection of information found in musical recordings, concerts and performances by artists in different media, interviews and articles published in newspapers, magazines and websites.

In the recent years we have witnessed a growing interest in cultural practices identified with the “popular” universe. TV programs, films, exhibitions, urban collectives, artists and songs circulate through various media vehicles triggering ideas, thoughts and ways of existence linked or identified with certain “popular” sectors of society. This profusion of speeches and articles that mention “popular” forms a complex and contradictory tangle of elements that speak at the same time several things. In general, the term “popular” is linked to a vector of social hierarchization, which often disqualify this production. So, speaking in a “restaurant”, “neighborhood” or “car” followed by adjective “popular” means to attribute to these nouns a bias that disqualifies them. However, not all the words about the popular reinforce this relative devaluation. Several demonstrations have an explicit link with certain elements of the popular exactly as

appreciation strategy, becoming positive a notoriously negative classification. It is in such cases the construction of aesthetic conflicts, ethical, behavioral, and especially political, compressing worldviews and social asymmetries through the culture.

The whole operation – involving negativity and positivity strategies – is based on certain recurrent clichés that link aspects of a vague “popular culture” with certain consumer devices. In other words, the popular is activated by stereotypes that are recognized or recognizable as markers of a certain cultural position, through which the conflicts are operated. The music may be one of the main artifacts that develops ideas about “popular” both as a form of affirmative activation of a social-cultural environment and as a vector of explanation of conflicts and varied clashes about these ideas.

Some of these narratives materialize themselves in a geographical connection, developing narratives about neighborhoods and spaces that work like *places* that belongs to popular things. In the specific case of Rio de Janeiro, national birthplace of samba mediatized, debates on “hills” and “suburb” add strong emotional load of appreciation of the happiness. What we are calling here “Pagode carioca” – groups of artists that act in the market since the 1970s disconnected from institutionalized spaces of Samba Schools (though some of them have strong emotional ties to the associations) – can be considered a samba style which, with high recurrence, builds the idea of festive popular. The pagode carioca has a repertoire that narrates the popular universe through a frankly optimistic perspective, highlighting places, community links and ideas related to a way of life. The humor, irony, relaxation, ethnic and social ties are spices of the life located at the base of the social pyramid, but still cheerful and happy.

Samba, pagode, and happiness: a brief history

In the last two decades, the categories “samba” and “pagode” were submitted to mixtures and tensions and currently take part

in a common context of appreciation of the popular through the joy and happiness. This process, in a way, started in the 1920s with the transformations of samba that produced its invention as a national music (VIANNA, 1995 SANDRONI, 2001). So not always explicit, samba has since then been a kind of spokesman of a social group living in the geographic and symbolic margin of the “official” society, working as recovery vector of the inhabitants of these areas and their cultural practices. Mostly made up of African descendants, the residents of peripheral areas of the metropolis found in samba repertoire a wealth of ideas and thoughts that continually processed the social and political belonging of this broad population set. Songs and appreciation of the imaginary of the “hill” produced in samba repertoire a set of ideas and narratives about the life style “popular”, giving both a symbolic recovery of such spaces and, in some cases, critical and tensioning of conditions of exclusion and segregation produced by the social hierarchy. Emblematic in the statement of this moment, the song *Alegria* (Assis Valente and Durval Maia) stated that the invention of samba and “batucada” (samba percussion) was a social action that was intended to produce joy and “save the pleasure”¹.

Assuming the risk of oversimplification, we can say that until the 1960s the Samba Schools functioned as aggregators core of samba practice, where community ties around music were

¹ The complete lyric of the Orlando Silva’s recording in 1937 is as follows: “Joy / To dance the batucada / Brunettes Will dance samba / Who dance samba has joy / My people were sad and bitter / invented the drumming / To let suffering / Save the pleasure, save the pleasure! // I do not want to know about sadness / Sadness makes me suffer / I’ll give up the cruel nostalgia / I go drumming / Night and day, I will sing! // Waiting happiness to see if I will be better / I will sing feeling joy / for Humanity do not see me cry”. Interestingly, this song that “cheerful” narrative suggested by the letter away from the idea of “happiness”, which could only be achieved when the singer-narrator “fell better”. The idea that happiness is an achieved goal individually by achieving a more favorable social position confirms that the happiness of the project is not exclusive of the middle class, but runs through the whole of society a few decades ago. The counterpoint exactly “popular” perhaps will occur on the value of “joy” (happiness portion capable of being evoked by the samba), essentially collective and performed by a membership group, “my people”.

connected to organizational activities of the party (the parade) in an efficient symbiosis permeated with the joy of meeting and sharing ideas.

During the 1960s and 1970s, however, the schools will be more professional and the show activity becomes increasingly profitable for the associations to the City of Rio de Janeiro, for the economy of the Rio de Janeiro and for the beginner television. Gradually, the parades of samba schools become highly profitable spectacle, changing their community popular festival features (Cavalcanti, 1994, p.52). Thus, the space of the Samba School will gradually ceasing to be a place of meeting to turn exclusively a place to the carnival competition and the founders samba dancers are being passed over in elections for directors, in sambas-plot choices and mainly in power bodies of the School. At the same time, the samba loses ground in the music industry and starts to dig in the cultural imagination as popular resistance vector against the consolidation of a new phase of the culture industry in Brazil (ORTIZ, 2001).

The emergence of samba spaces and new samba schools out of the School's environment, occurred mainly from the beginning of the 1970s sets up a benchmark for *meeting of samba* – not more of the “schools” of samba – as a founding element of gender. Still closely linked to the centrality of Rio de Janeiro in the process of nationalization of imaginary and samba markets, some samba dancers linked to samba performed on the court of the Carnival group Cacique de Ramos assume a certain role in the samba musical repertoire and “invent” a new samba style, which was eventually named “Pagode”. Artists like Jorge Aragão, Almir Guineto, Zeca Pagodinho, Arlindo Cruz and Sombrinha, among others, were gradually conquering space in the market with a “different” samba, more sophisticated harmonically, accompanied by instruments like tantan, banjo and tambourine. During this period, the term “pagoda” referred to this venue, symbolic space of realization of samba, no longer necessarily linked to the Samba Schools.

What interests us in this process is the gradual emergence of new samba ratings, which seek to gradually shift some samba

dancers practices from the symbolic universe of Rio’s samba schools, (which) holding at the time a partial legitimacy to safeguard the “tradition” of the genre. The consequence of this change is that several initiatives within samba practices which were out of legitimated approval of the schools start to adopt nicknames or accessory categories to give to the music business a samba work. In a way, the “bossa nova” by João Gilberto, the “samba new scheme” by Jorge Benjor and the “pagode” by Cacique de Ramos are distinct answers (symbolically and aesthetically) to this change.

In the specific case, the classification “pagode”, rather than a rigid aesthetic demarcation, the term emphasizes the ideas of “spontaneity” and “festive reconciliation”, which have always been present in the samba mindset. But the new term dramatically reduces the importance of ancestry and tradition notions, quite important in the samba legitimacy from the end of the 1950s. Thus, it is possible to say that the way is opened for other aesthetic samba, far from the romanticized hills of the old federal capital.

In the early 1990s the huge commercial success of romantic pagode groups opened a debate about the boundaries of samba, blurring boundaries and conquering significant space in the music business. Love, happiness and joy are the fundamental mottos of the musical repertoire of pagode groups of the period (TROTТА 2011).

At the turn of the 21st century, the success of artists linked to more “traditional” samba as Zeca Pagodinho and Martinho da Vila started a gradual merger which took place over the years, a kind of hybrid commercial label in which the two categories appeared together linked by an “&”: “Samba & Pagode”. Through this label, circulates in the music business a happy imaginary of the popular singing the joy of love and romantic conquests, social meetings, the party, suburban and outlying areas, ways of being and living of the lower income sectors social stratification.

This contemporary pagode universe remains strongly linked symbolically to the geography of Rio de Janeiro, but not through the “hills” – very specific topography of social segregation in the

metropolis – but through the broader, generic idea of “suburb”. The notion of suburban and peripheral, which is known in Rio like a space formed by neighborhoods and communities with lower property values and people of lower income (although this is a simplification), can be transported to any city, allowing the emergence of a contemporary samba that is appropriate all over the country.

The suburb of Rio: history and the imaginary

During the Empire and the Republic, until the 60s, Rio de Janeiro remained not only as a political capital, but also as a privileged space of cultural miscegenation processes, representing a Brazilian identity model that was spread as the core of national culture. The city was a center of attraction of both the elites, with their schools, theaters, newspapers and institutions of the federal government, as the mass freed from slavery regime, which saw the then capital as a place that could offer greater possibilities. Especially in the late 19th century, the city had a huge growth, bringing together a group of people consisting of slaves, former slaves and workers with ill-defined occupation (OLIVEIRA, 2000, p.139), who were the “excluded” of the Empire. These people formed several communities, focusing primarily in the city center and surrounding areas, especially in the incipient tenements, slums and surrounding hills. In these places, the samba begins to be gestated as many cultural movement of the population with lower purchasing power and as a meeting place for intellectuals and journalists with composers of these strata.

The samba’s birth marks the time when boundaries between white people and black people, rich and poor, tradition and modernity, high culture and popular culture are shuffled. The emergence of new standards for the urban culture from Rio tensed notions of progress and backwardness, domestic and foreign, authentic and co-opted, generating a number of conflicts around the different seizures of the popular in the city. Popular festivals and music become a conductive medium of this interpenetration.

Meanwhile, the suburbs (at that time basically encompassed the regions of Gamboa, Saúde, Penha and the vicinity) were presented by the press as places characterized by violence, addictions, threats to order (OLIVEIRA, 2000, p.142) which characterize the habits of a population forced to move from the downtown by the Europeanizing urban project. But for some intellectuals and writers such as Lima Barreto, on the contrary, the suburb was stronghold of popular culture, folk songs of the composers, guitar serenades, carnival popular performance, the cockfights. In view of these thinkers, the suburbs represent the true Brazil, as would most authentic in terms of traditions, habits and customs of the people.

In the old nomenclature, the current city of Rio de Janeiro was divided into three zones: Urban, which included the present city center, the South Zone and the area of Tijuca and surroundings; the Suburban, which included the districts gathered in the called North Zone; and the Rural, then called West Zone, covering the entire western half of the county. In popular language, this specific region that gathers the North Zone, the West Zone and part of the old Urban Zone – Centro (especially Tijuca and vicinity) is called “suburb” in a sense of “periphery”, assuming some pejorative connotations that have close relationship with class and color issues. This area, in particular, brings together a working class (which may also be underemployed or unemployed), historically poorly provided with services and consumer options. The suburb thus came to be seen as synonymous with poverty, inferiority, late, from a discriminatory perspective.

Just as the recent spread of the term ‘urban’ as a synonym for cosmopolitan and universal, is a creation of the ‘modern’ today, the widespread suburban idea how needy place, without order or comfort, inhabited by poor people, uneducated or refinement, it seems to be a creation of the old Rio elites (LOPES, 2012, p.9).

This separation of the city in different areas was also related with the proximity of each area to the coast. Nearby the sea neighborhoods were considered the most important and valued,

allocating preferably the upper classes, public buildings and administrative and financial centers. According to Lopes, the proposal to connect the coast of elites to the administrative center of the city, especially during the administration of Mayor Francisco Pereira Passos (1902-1906), drove slowly to the poorest people, who went to the hillsides or the outskirts of town. With the installation of more distant factories from the center, and later with the construction of the railway, the population began to concentrate along the railway network. Thus, the “suburb” expression sometimes used in the plural, was renamed all residential and industrial area comprised between Serra do Engenho Novo, the Morro do Telégrafo (in Mangueira) and the Retiro Hill (Maciço dos Coqueiros/Retiro, in Realengo), from the last decades of the 19th century, along the railway lines that ran toward the inside (BERNARDES; SOARES, 1995, p.98).

In the 1960s, the suburban landscape took cluttered appearance, with little infrastructure and meager access to basic services, increasingly inhabited by populations with low purchasing power, which still depended on long journeys through the rail, to the center and Zone South. The need for consumer sources and closer services has generated commercial sub-centers in traditional suburban centers as Madureira, Meier, Tijuca, Bangu and Campo Grande. For Fernandes (1996), the word suburb, in the most modern sense, did not refer now to the outskirts of the city, but to these poor neighborhoods rail and heavy commercial premises situated within the territory of the urban area. During this period, Rio has undergone new changes in urban space. The Lacerda government undertook controversial projects such as the removal of the South Side slums and the construction of popular assemblies in the suburbs of the West. One of the hallmarks of urbanization of Rio de Janeiro are the many slums in the hills located in the heart of south, and the eviction of these prime areas interested the real estate capital and the expansion of civil construction, favoring profitable investments and speculation. There was also pressure from the middle classes in the name of “progress” and “well-being” and the removal of slums has become

demand of public policy. The displacement of the population was also accompanied by an enlargement of the road network. The tunneling (such as Santa Barbara, linking the Catumbi neighborhood to Laranjeiras, and the Rebouças tunnel, connecting the Rio Comprido to the Lagoa), the construction of viaducts and the increase in road transport supply have contributed to a more effective link between north and south zones. "The resulting road system and the development model adopted by the country demanded faster highways" (MOTTA, 2000, p.89).

Growth in the Rio metropolitan area turned out to be caused much more by the very expansion of the suburbs, and also the countryside (which ranges from Deodoro to Santa Cruz, passing through Campo dos Afonsos to Sepetiba), than by the expansion of the central zone. What was motivated by population growth, caused by the intense rural exodus that in the 20th century contributed to the uncontrolled growth of urban and suburban population.

Today, the suburb *versus* South Zone opposition is striking and in the public domain for Rio, marking a space that is understood in the northern part of the city and mainly encompasses the neighborhoods cut off by the railways of Central do Brasil and of Leopoldina. (SOUZA, 2003, p.98). At the same time, in addition to geographic category, the suburb is also a social category, synonymous with poverty, old fashioned, bad patterns. On the other hand, the suburbs represent the union of the rural and the urban in design a place where personal relationships, community and traditions would be stronger (SOUZA, 2003, p.99). In the definition of a suburban identity, can be highlighted specific attributes such as greater interpersonal Communication, more solidarity and closeness in the relations of neighborhood and friendship. Community social life in the suburbs would be characterized today by a higher quality and intensity of social relations. Instead of stereotypes as naive, anachronistic, provincialism, the suburbs began to be perceived as a source of new languages, aesthetics, fashion, and survival strategies, defining other borders beyond the geographical demarcation. It can be seen also, finally, as a place of happy people.

The place of happy popular

The happiness narrative in the samba and pagode inevitably involves the defense of spaces of affirmation of community ties and physical and symbolic places of musical achievement. We can say that since its formation, the samba repertoire has always been prodigal in creating songs that claimed the neighborhoods and hills as samba, community and joy spaces. Specific seats as Mangueira, Estácio, Serrinha, Praça Onze, Lapa, Portela, exalted in dozens of song lyrics, formed a kind of symbolic embodiment of the samba circuit, related to the gathering of samba. This exaltation has a strong reference in the context of carnival and samba schools with their physical spaces (districts and hills), but is extended to other samba spaces. What is at stake in all these spaces idealized manifestations is the affirmation of continuity between the joy of samba practice and the places where this practice occurs.

In many instances, neighborhoods and places (in addition to samba meetings) take decisive moral function in the individual experiences and sociability of the locals-singers. It is as if somehow the community life of neighborhoods and hills took a form in a “way of being” popular, to be ratified and exalted in songs, samba meetings and festive gatherings. A scathing example of this imaginary is the song *Meu nome é favela* (*My name is slum*) by Rafael Delgado and recorded by Arlindo Cruz, in which are listed some features that establish the identity of the character, self-defined as “born suburban”.

I've always been like that
Full strength and purity of heart
[...]
It is so normal to see me
Drinking beer in a bar wearing slipper
I can not avoid informal chat
When I go out to buy bread
Talk about soccer games and what's going on again on TV
Born Suburb, proudly
Show on my smile our suburban climate

The set of elements that merge personal identity with the popular “way of being” of the author is built around stereotypes of community well being and “neighborhood” sociability practices. It is the talk about everyday topics (especially soccer and TV), the cultural habit of clothing and relaxation (the “slipper”), the meeting point (the “bar”) and the straight moral disposition that shape the “climate” manifest in the joy of the smile and in the outskirts pride. There is no longer relevant in this song the proposed symbolic indissociation between “slum” and “suburb”, suitable as peripheral areas of existence of the popular community through these stereotypes and conduct. Of course, such a proposal can not be generalized because there are several other narratives that establish substantive distinctions between the ways of the popular resident in the slums, the “peripheries” and in the suburbs. It is, in our view, a demonstration that has much to do with the geography of social segregation in the city of Rio de Janeiro in its northern part, where the slums located in the hills of the neighborhoods of lower real estate valuation (further away from the beaches and from the city center) have certain symbolic and everyday continuity with the “asphalt”. Arlindo Cruz is a samba dancer whose perspective of “suburb” is closely related to the Madureira neighborhood, site of great commercial concentration (the Municipal Market of Madureira), of a high visibility hill-slum (Serrinha) and of two samba schools consecrated (Portela and Império Serrano). In the Samba *Meu Lugar, My Place*, a partnership with Mauro Diniz and one of the best known songs of Arlindo repertoire, the neighborhood is exalted explicitly, again showing certain stereotypes as beer, pagode on every corner, walking with swing, “smile, peace and pleasure”.

This kind of narrative of ethical appreciation of a “popular” place which is transposed to neighborhoods and hills can be relocated to any space, transcending the geography of Rio. An interesting example of this is the song *Terra Prometida (Promised Land)* – recorded by the Pagode group Negritude Junior, whose place of community moral training is the Carapicuíba popular housing project (the “Cohab”), in the great São Paulo, place that also narrates the myth of origin of the group’s own foundation.

In Cohab place
I've learned what life is
Sweet home, loved land
The tambourine beat
I've found a way out

In a sort of fusion between the imagery of the group formation that find a profession through music and the ethical and community learning of housing, the song recounts an experience from the popular samba, providing teaching, sociability and, in this case, economic viability. It is true that the romance that we can observe in Arlindo Cruz to narrate Madureira is replaced in the rest of the lyrics of *Promised Land* (suggestive title, by the way!) through clashes between illegal and legal, crime, violence and the difficulties of also structuring livelihood of a certain narrative of popular. In common between the two there is a close identification between place, a set of affective, ethical and aesthetic provisions (to employ a Bourdieusian language) and the “hit of the tambourine”.

It would be possible to enroll here dozens of examples that browse this semantic field associating a sense of joy and happiness to certain physical places which in turn are crossed in some way by samba. Just to illustrate the forcefulness of this line of argument, it is worth observing the letter of the song *Suburbano Feliz* (*Happy Suburban*) – by Barbeirinho from Jacarezinho, Luiz Grande and Marquinhos Diniz, recorded by group Toque de Prima.

I feel happy to be suburban person
Our living together is respect and decency with warmth
Every weekend enjoying the amateur soccer
A lot of pagode and iced beer
It has no treason, just friendship among the guys
[...]
The suburb gives concert in social life
The suburb is, anyone who wants to talk
A cool place to live
Even if I get rich, man
I never leave there

In the case of Toque de Prima, the suburban identity is vector of happiness again, which in turn is linked to a kind of community life, the collective sociability events that establish the suburban “social life”.

But it would be insufficient to observe the construction of an imaginary of happiness associated with a narrative of the “popular” based on the value of peripheral places only from the verbal dimension of some letters. The connection of the pagode to samba music market in the past two decades materializes soundly in samba beat and its sound marks identifiers. And by extension, the meaning and nuances of an appreciation of popular happiness are also processed in specific sounds of samba and the current pagode, establishing themselves as gender with one of the stronger stereotyped elements connecting “popular” and “happiness”.

The sounds of popular happiness

The sound is one of the most audible elements of musical practice. Even before the identification of a rhythmic pattern or harmonic, melodic or thematic clichés, the acoustic result of the combination among the instruments and the vocal performance establishes a symbolic universe and establishes connections with repertoires and musical genres. With samba, of course, this is not different. The sound of the tambourine, the guitar and the drums sets up an immediate identification not only with certain repertoires, but also with a time history and a series of symbols associated with the samba. But if it is true that this basic samba sound identification provides recognition elements of the genre and their imaginary, can not be denied that from the beginning of the national music industry the sounds of samba has been recorded with numerous instrumental combinations. Depending on the season, the style, the singer or the arranger, the instrumental samba variations articulate negotiations with these more basic structural symbols of their recognition. The approach with the crying in Pixinguinha band arrangements in the 1930s or the orchestral arrangements of Radames Gnattali

in the 1940s establish distinct sound and symbolic strategies for recorded sambas. Likewise, the neutralization of polyrhythms and the smoothing of the vocal interpretation of João Gilberto in the late 1950s guard profound stylistic differences with torn vocal style and the rhythmic complexity of Zé Ketti recordings in the early 1960.

In the first case, the use of instruments such as saxophone, piano, acoustic bass, the suits blows and the drums guided this imaginary more “sophisticated”. On the other hand, torn and hoarse vocals, accompanied by many percussion instruments and one or more predominant cavaquinhos (kind of ukuleles) establish a strong connection with the ideas of “authenticity” and “spontaneity”. But of course we can not split the broad universe of sounds of samba recordings in two antagonistic poles. A huge variety of sound combinations fill the space between these two very complex form of paradigms, building less obvious meanings and interpretations and more contradictory.

The emergence of romantic pagode in the early 1990s had as a landmark a sounds trading, which sought to eliminate some of the samba polyrhythms with the goal of producing a song “cleaner” and more “direct” (TROTTA, 2011). During the decade, however, varied mixtures led to several sound synthesis that have materialized in the condensation of the category “Samba & Pagode” in which sound values rather employed by artists who have left Cacique de Ramos’ meeting samba and were consolidated as hegemonic. Part of this synthesis is related to the huge commercial success of Zeca Pagodinho, leading exponent of samba for nearly two decades and closely linked to the Cacique context. But the approach of sounding groups emerged in the 1990s as the Exaltasamba, Só Para Contrariar and Revelação with the aesthetic proposals and sound Fundo de Quintal establishes a common ground to develop a samba sound in the early 21st century. Made up of a complex polyrhythmic development with a very strong emphasis on some musical instruments such as the cavaquinho (or *ukulele*), the *pandeiro* (often nylon, not canvas), in *tantan*, *reco-reco*, *bass* and *drums*, contemporary samba pagode

manifests so very evident a festive narrative that exalts the samba itself and the joy of meetings around the genre.

What we would like to emphasize here is that this sound passes through diverse artists as acoustic incarnation of an idea of joy. Happiness is not always explicit in the lyrics of the songs, but the appreciation of the meeting places, driven by parties, beer and pagode is common ground that runs through the works of almost all the artists identified with the samba and the pagode. One of the most prominent samba dancers in the current market is Thiaguinho from São Paulo, former lead singer of Exaltasamba group who launched in 2013 his first solo album, entitled suggestively *Ousadia e Alegria (Daring and joy)*. In 2014, the song *Caraca, moleque (Whoa, boy)*, the opening track from his second album, entitled *Outro dia, outra história (Another day, another story)*, part of the soundtrack of the soap opera *Geração Brasil* (Globo, 2014) sounding the “poor core” of the plot. This is the lyrics:

Wow, kid
 What a day, what is it?
 Put an ‘pagodinho’, just to relax
 Sun, beach, bikini, idleness
 Open a cold just to refresh
 I ‘m Healthy, I have money
 Thank you God!
 And to my warriors, They are all armed
 I’m going to have success!
 Today I’m that crazy kid with energy

The sound of *Caraca, moleque* is basically made up of cavaquinho (ukulele), guitar, drums, keyboards, bass, tambourine and cuíca (samba instrument). The lively basis of the monitoring carried resonates in Thiaguinho’s performance, who always sings with a smile, accompanied by a chorus which reinforces the main parts of the chorus, sung in the medium-high, with emphasis on the open vowels of the first syllable of the slang the “caraca”. The state of effusive spirit described in the letter thus acquires a sonorous expression that is related to the singing structure of

the lyrics, with the smiling performance of singer and with the sound of “pagodinho” tinting the joy and the comfortable situation described in the song. All this sound together form a coherent environment of intense affirmation of a state of happiness, crossed by identification with the context of urban popular culture, present in slang, the amusement devices (beer, beach, sociability, pagode) and above all in samba sound.

To finish: the music and the popular happiness

Popular culture is a tricky category. In a sense, to speak of a set of cultural practices qualifying it with the adjective “popular” necessarily imposes the idea that such practices represent logical, aesthetic and specific world views and that differ from another culture, non-popular (CHARTIER, 1995). On the other hand, several narratives about hegemonic cultural practices seem to absorb different shades and nuances in the various income and education levels in local housing and the aesthetic predilections and ethical codes of society.

Following this reasoning, it is often advisable to seek interpretations of social phenomena with caution to circumscribe such conclusions to certain sectors of society, avoiding generalizations. But in the contemporary world, the intense cultural flow promoted by a set of technological artifacts put culture in constant transit. And it would be no exaggeration to say that much of the cultural practices with increased circulation capacity among places, social classes and historical time is music.

Thinking about the society through music puts us in the difficult situation of trying to understand the specificity of appropriation that the various social groups make of the repertoires that circulate on a large or small scale and at the same time interpret the endless cracks that continuously establish contacts among various social and musical groups. In Brazil, the symbolic importance of the samba (and pagode) provides an ingredient else to think about this translocation of the ideas circulating in the tambourine hit by various strata of our society. In this sense,

we think it can be said that the hegemonic impulse that attracts individuals to the intense pursuit of happiness can be found in several examples and with varying intensities, in all social classes. The narrative of popular happiness expressed, communicated and tensioned by samba and the pagode is a striking example of this ubiquity of the desire to be happy, on the hill, on the asphalt, in the suburbs, in the slums or on the beach.

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