

EDITORIAL

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS AS WAYS TO PRESERVE AND OPEN SPACE FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

*As expressões artísticas como caminhos para preservar e abrir
espaço a pessoas migrantes e refugiadas*

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The contemporary debate about migration and refuge is marked by a dispute over narratives and representations. There are approaches that feed the criminalization of migrants and refugees from a security perspective, while others emphasize the positive aspects of mobility, denounce violations and even become a sounding board from the perspective of the subjects involved. This dispute of narratives and representations is fought through “cultural products”, among which, in this REMHU dossier, we highlight artistic expressions.

These artistic expressions, in principle, as cultural activities, can be mobilized both to promote rights, denounce violations and to spread xenophobic and racist perspectives, moved even by the mere market and capital logic. Even so, in recent years, the importance assumed by “engaged” or “committed” art with social movements of resistance and struggle for the defense and promotion of the rights of individuals and peoples is unquestionable. The expression “artivism” (Ciurlo, 2020; Trione, 2022) goes in this direction, focusing on a way of making art in the service of a cause, directly or indirectly, in a political-militant way or through an ethical engagement (Napolitano, 2011, p. 29).

It is not our specific objective to enter into the complex issue of the relationship between art and politics, between aesthetics and ethics, with its possible implications. We just want to emphasize how, in fact, in recent years, artistic production has increasingly prioritized the relationship with reality, especially with the daily reality suffered and violated: the degradation of planet earth, the victims of war conflicts, the leftover masses and, specifically, the

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millions of migrants and refugees who seek to be recognized as human beings and bearers of rights even outside their countries of birth.

In the context of human mobility, artistic expressions have different approaches and focuses, also depending on the type of language used. There are those who prioritize the chronicle, those who denounce, those who poetic re-reading, those who witness, those who empathize with migrant subjects – seeing reality from the sea and not from the land (Trione, 2022). However, in all cases, as Italo Calvino (2007) said in relation to cinema, we seek to focus on what, in everyday life, the naked eye tends to notice with inattention, without much care. In this perspective, artistic production becomes a magnifying glass on reality, a magnifying glass that, with its numerous codes, symbols and languages, amplifies, interrogates, subverts and reinterprets the universe of human mobility and its hegemonic typifications.

In a specific way, art tends to value subjectivity, the perspective of subjects, especially when it is carried out by people on the move: art, in this sense, becomes the voice of the voiceless, sometimes the only “word” available to those who, as “foreigners” and/or “non-citizens”, are excluded from all political and civic spaces of participation. In other cases, the use of artistic production as means of expression is also motivated by reasons of censorship and persecution, both in the case of migrants and solidary people.

Artistic manifestations convey individual claims, but also collective ones, when they involve community practices of interaction, or when they are recognized and express the perspective of the community in public spaces. Furthermore, art involves a process of reception, in which the “receiving group” interacts, reinterprets, appropriates, disseminates and, in this way, impacts social transformation. In addition to the work itself and the “author’s intention”, artistic production is shaped and reconfigured by the reception and interpretation of the migrant community, as well as by its dissemination in public spaces (Mercado, 2017), especially when it occurs in circumstances and unusual places – streets, dumps, squares, bus stops, walls, poles, etc.

Finally, for many migrants and refugees, the use of artistic and performing expressivities also has a cathartic and therapeutic function, insofar as it allows the sound, visual and verbal manifestation of their own identity, their own cosmovisions, their own sufferings and imprisoned cries. It is also a therapeutic resource as a possibility of dialogue, inclusion and encounter with the diversity of the external environment: often, by activating languages and artistic codes, bridges and spaces of empathic and solidary proximity between people from different cultures are opened, which can also favoring dynamics of welcoming and symmetrical insertion.

Returning to Italo Calvino – whose birth centenary will be celebrated next year –, the well-known conclusion of “Le città invisibili” calls attention to the need to deal with the daily “hell” in which we live, a hell not infrequently much more suffered in the trajectories of many migrants and refugees: perhaps art is a privileged way to recognize what is not hell and open a welcoming space for it.

The hell of the living is not something that will be; if there is, it is the one that is already here, the hell we live in every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways not to suffer. The first is easy for most people: to accept hell and become a part of it to the point of no longer noticing it. The second is risky and requires continuous attention and learning: *knowing who and what, in the midst of hell, is not hell, and preserving it, and making room for it.* (Calvino, 1990, translation and emphasis ours)

In the first article of the REMHU 66 dossier, *Kelvin Venturin* reflects on the meanings of sound-musical performance based on the case of a Senegalese percussionist residing in Brazil. The author uses the theoretical tools of musical studies and, above all, ethnomusicology to underline the connection among sound-musical production, (national) cultures, imaginaries and challenges related to mobility and life in diasporic contexts. The fundamental question is how the use and circulation of sound-musical-performance resources can contribute to the paths of mobility and emancipation. In the specific case, Moustapha – the Senegalese percussionist Sabar – mobilized performative resources with a view to developing strategies for insertion in Brazil, even in the face of the challenges of discrimination and the pandemic. His case is a sample of post-colonial African youth who, by activating musical imaginations, skills and expertise, seek to creatively find ways of mobility, emancipation and even dialogue and openness to encounter new musical styles.

Remaining in the sound-musical dimension, the article by *Gleyber Eustáquio Calaça Silva*, *Duval Magalhães Fernandes* and *Leonardo Henrique Alves de Lima Nascimento* addresses the international mobility of Heavy Metal bands. According to the authors, the Heavy Metal style, born in 1970 in England, is characterized by a certain eclecticism, both by the influence of different musical styles, and by the deep immersion in local cultures and the consequent emergence of numerous subgenres. The worldwide diffusion of this musical style also led, over time, to a displacement of the bands themselves, in the sense of moving their permanent headquarters to another country, which is the focus of reflection in the article. The text shows how, in addition to migratory policies, historical-cultural proximity and logistical challenges, the mobility of bands is also conditioned by marketing factors, as well as the desire to participate in a musical circuit recognized at a planetary level and to improve in reference places of the subgenre itself.

Turning to literary expression, *Alejo López* focuses on the poet Lorna Dee Cervantes and reflects on the resistance of minority cultures from the Chicano people, who experienced and still live the challenge of the “border displacement”, a displacement that made him foreigner in his land itself. The focus of the reflection is mainly on the issue of language as a “political instrument of resistance to the assimilative acculturation and the sociocultural subalternization that the hegemonic powers exert on these minority identities”. The relationship between language and power, the violence of the so-called “glotocidio”, the challenges of assimilation and “dispossession” are the hallmarks of the Chicano condition, which Lorna Dee Cervantes relates to the refugee situation: “I feel like I’m a captive / on board a refugee boat. / The boat that never docks”. Even so, argues López, Chicano poetry also has the capacity to seek forms of emancipation and identity resistance in the interstitial spaces that allow “forging a new identity formation supported in its same frontier condition”. The scars testify to the violence suffered, but at the same time, they open the door to the future and hope.

Continuing within the scope of literature, *Cleilson Queiroz Lopes* proposes a reflection on walking as an aesthetic practice from a dramaturgy elaborated in transit, on a return trip to his hometown in Ceará. Inspired by other similar experiences developed in other countries, the author develops a cartography in which the starting point (*Rio de Janeiro*), the arrival point (*Iguatu*) and, above all, the experience of transit interact, not as a place of passage, but as a place of artistic production. The experience of deterritorialization, of drifting, of exile, of “losing oneself” and being dominated by space, trigger a poetic production and, above all, encounters with otherness that challenge and stimulate artistic production. The “walking”, the “transiting” is the experience of millions of migrants and, specifically, of Northeastern and Northeastern people who, for different reasons, set out on their way, transiting between places, between times, in a drift often marked by suffering, by vulnerability and by the desire to return.

A similar experience is experienced by Aymara and Quechua migrants, from Bolivia and Peru, who, in the city of São Paulo, express their indigenous and Andean identity in music and dance collectives. In her article, *Cristina de Branco* reflects on the relationship among performative-cultural expressions, Andean-Altiplano identity and the migratory process. For Aymara and Quechua migrants, collectives are not just folkloric or artistic groups, as they express autochthonous cosmovisions that re-signify times and spaces, with their musical instruments, costumes, songs and dances. In a diasporic context, first and second generations trigger autochthonous expressiveness in new socio-cultural contexts marked by urban life in the city of São Paulo and new space-temporal references. The article, in addition to focusing on the strict relationship between

performative expressiveness and Andean altiplano cultural traditions, pays attention to the strong presence of indigenous migrants in Brazil, a presence that became more mediatic with the recent arrival of the Venezuelan Warao, but which remains until today quite invisible in relation to the Bolivian and Peruvian populations. As Branco affirms, it is necessary to deconstruct the “methodological nationalism”, which guides States, academic institutions and civil society.

Artistic expressiveness also has a cathartic and therapeutic function, even helping in the processes of insertion in the land of arrival. *Lucas de Oliveira Alves*, *Lucienne Martins-Borges* and *Ana Lúcia Mandelli de Marsillac* reflect on the therapeutic potential of art as a path of trauma elaboration. Based on theoretical tools from (ethno)psychoanalysis and critical social theories, the article focuses mainly on the situation of people who, on their migratory journeys, have experienced serious situations of violence and coercion (especially refugees). According to the authors, art can help in the re-elaboration of eventual traumatic events and reestablish the ability to fictionalize reality, especially through cultural inclusion, the transmission of memories and the construction of new narratives not necessarily linked to orality and writing, but also to other artistic languages. The article, on the one hand, emphasizes the therapeutic potential of art, especially for people who have migrated and faced traumatic events; on the other hand, it emphasizes the collective dimension of artistic production, which always implies the interaction with and the reception of a collectivity, a fact that contributes to the structuring of a collective memory and to the strengthening of the ethical commitment in favor of the refugee cause.

Finally, *Cristina Santinho* develops a reflection on the potential of participatory artistic projects to support the sociocultural inclusion of migrants and refugees. Based on four artistic projects developed in Portugal, the author interprets art as an opportunity for social intervention, as a cathartic place that allows the emergence of communion, empathy, solidarity and new sociability. Theater, dance and music enable individual empowerment and social mobilization in a country such as Portugal, where, despite current legislation, there are still many obstacles to the citizen integration of migrants and refugees. Among other aspects, the author highlights the role of artistic projects in learning the local language, socializing with indigenous people, raising public awareness of the cause of migrants and refugees, strengthening social inclusion and, above all, the self-esteem of people on the move. Finally, the importance of partnerships and collaboration between civil society organizations, migrants and refugees, universities and the State is also highlighted, with a view to achieving the goals set.

In addition to the dossier, REMHU n. 66 has 5 texts in the *articles section*. In 2022, the Recognition of Refugee Status in Brazil (*RSD*) procedure based on Law 9.474/97 completed 25 years. Since the law was enacted and the right to refuge recognized, practical changes have taken place in the implementation of the procedure. In the article that opens the section, the authors *Liliana Lyra Jubilut* and *Giovana Agútolí Pereira* described and analyzed the changes in the *RSD* procedure since its implementation in Brazil, making contributions regarding the impacts of these changes on the recognition process. The authors maintain that there have been some positive changes (for example, the use of technology), but it is important to carefully analyze the issue, as it is necessary for the *RSD* procedure to preserve the standards of protection guaranteed by International Refugee Law and International Human Rights Law.

Renato Zerbini Ribeiro Leão and *Felipe González Morales* address the issue of the right to health of migrant women from the perspective of the United Nations Organizations, especially in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the analysis of decisions, documents and reports, the authors highlighted the relevance of the study within the international debate on the migratory phenomenon and, specifically, on the so-called feminization of migrations. Despite UN guidelines regarding the gender perspective, restrictive policies during the pandemic and the lack of human and material resources in several countries restricted access to health for women and other vulnerable populations. In this perspective, the authors recommend the development and implementation of public policies and cooperation between countries to reduce inequalities in women's access to health.

Still on the subject of health, *Samantha Serrano* and *Denise Martin*, starting from an intersectional perspective between migration, health and gender, sought to discuss domestic violence faced by Bolivian migrants in home sewing workshops. Through ethnographic descriptions of the stories of migrant women who lived in workshops, the authors highlight the relationship between violence, precarious work and domestic spatial isolation, which creates difficulties for the creation of support networks. The importance of articulating the social and health sectors is highlighted in the promotion of access policies and training of professionals to recognize and deal with situations of violence faced by these women who, often due to lack of guidance or difficulties in dealing with language and with their own health system, they end up not taking forward the complaints against their aggressors.

Rose Jaji's article looks at the sociocultural impacts of transnational migration on family reconfiguration in Zimbabwe. Its objective, based on qualitative research, is to demonstrate how migration influences the definition of new roles within the family structure, thus opposing the traditional configuration. The author presents how new family arrangements are built as a

result of the absence of members who have migrated. In this way, gender roles, parenting, age and childhood are reconfigured, causing traditional family values in Zimbabwe to lose their centrality and to be changed. The traditional family structure becomes more fluid as it embraces transnational spaces.

Closing the section, articles *Iana dos Santos Vasconcelos* and *Sandro Martins de Almeida Santos* discuss a topic that has not yet been discussed, the impact of emotions on the implementation of government policies. The author and the author write about the impact of emotions on the performance of the military in *Acolhida* Operation, developed by the Brazilian State in Roraima. The mission of these soldiers is to promote the management of shelter and food for Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers, a mission considered “eminently humanitarian”, but carried out by the armed forces – which are not trained for this – and with a clearly security focus. From the ethnographic description of scenes, it explores how the affections involved are managed by the military in an ambivalent way (ranging from compassion to hatred), being such “emotional discontinuity” as opposed to the continuity of state action and institutional guidelines.

In the “Reports and Reflections” section, Senegalese percussionist *Moustapha Diene* together with journalist *Ramila Moura* and anthropologist *Kelvin Venturin* tell about their life trajectory, as a migrant from Africa and master of *sabar* in Brazil.

Roberto Marinucci's review of the book *Confini, Mobilità e Migrazioni. Una cartografia dello spazio europeo*, organized by Lorenzo Navone, closes the issue.

We wish you a good reading!

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