

Brazilian Popular Music Economy Aspects: The Baile Funk Circuit

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Abstract

The paper aims to deepen the discussion of the production, circulation, and consumption Brazilian’s musical genre funk carioca, identifying it’s main in the music field, besides the figures and the practices that move their businesses. Since its consolidation, funk has created a both sustainable and autonomous pioneer circuit in relation with the major’s label model, which allows us to sketch a model of the popular music economy in Brazil, based on practices such as technological appropriation, authorship flexibilization, emphasis on the live performance instead of selling material supports. A model that introduces strategies to deal with the record industry crisis.

**Keywords:** funk carioca, music business, technologial appropriation, authorship flexibilization

**Introduction**

For almost 30 years, funk has been one of the most favorite musical genres among the working class youngsters in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Funk is the soundtrack for everyday life in favelas and outskirts, and going to a baile funk is a favorite night entertainment activity during weekends and holidays. Therefore, there is no doubt that the funk balls circuit is one of the most important ramifications of the carioca creative industry.

Nonetheless, funk’s consolidation as a *carioca*[[1]](#endnote-1)’s suburbs and favelas musical expression doesn’t imply a wide cultural acknowledgement. The musical genre is one of the most persecuted and stigmatized by the media, the police and “opinion makers”, who repeatedly demonstrated moral panic arguments to analyze the phenomenon[[2]](#endnote-2).

This is the main reason why simple questions, such as – How many balls are held weekly, and, how much in figures do they raise? Or, what is the number of frequenters? – remain unanswered, since this phenomenon economical dimension has deserved less attention than its sociological, aesthetical, or even moral aspects.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Seeking to fill this gap, the paper aims to deepen the discussion on aspects of the production, circulation, and consumption of the Brazilian musical genre funk carioca, or baile funk, identifying it’s main agents, their activities, positions in the music field, besides the figures and the practices that move their businesses.

The premise is that since its consolidation in the 1980s, funk has created a both sustainable and autonomous pioneer circuit in relation with the major’s label model, which allows us to sketch a model of the popular music economy in Brazil, based on practices such as technological appropriation, authorship flexibilization, emphasis on the live performance and valorization of local social relationships instead of selling material supports. A model that introduces strategies currently described as innovative to deal with the record industry crisis since the decline of material products like CDs and DVDs.

We try to demonstrate how, in this case, copyrights flexibilization is not only an ideological “flag”, neither the result of a “rational” decision, consciously taken. Much of the funk carioca music production is made in home studios and there is an intense exchange of samples files between the artists via the Internet. The distribution of this production is free and is made by specialized websites, or by the artists during their presentations. In this case, the CD works as a business card and its main role is not to generate profit through the collection of copyrights, but to produce visibility to the work of artists who can do more presentations. The production chain horizontalization, and the valorization of labor, local social relationships, and informal market are central elements to new music businesses, justifying its inclusion as solid example of creative solutions within today's entertainment chain.

To address the above mentioned questions, the work is organized in three main sections: the first addresses briefly the development of “bailes funk” in Rio de Janeiro; the second is focused on identifying the main agents of funk – the "sound system crews", the DJs and MCs – their activities, positions in the music field and tensions. And finally, in the third section, we will discuss the dilemmas associated with the technological appropriations that allow this sub-genre production and circulation, and niche media use such as the balls themselves, community radio stations, pirate CDs, as well as websites, blogs, and social networks; focusing the discussion around the musical "independence" category as well.

It is important to note that this paper presents the partial results of a broader ongoing research[[4]](#endnote-4). Thus, the accomplished interviews are part of the qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork, coupled with participant observation of the funk balls and environments.

Our key informants were the DJs Batata and Sany Pitbul, and MC Serginho. DJ Batata joined the funk scene in the early 90's, and artists like Tati Quebra-Barraco and Bonde do Tigrão feature among his main musical production works. He has also worked with DJ Marlboro and was part of the Furacão 2000 sound crew. Sany Pitbull is one of the DJs with greater visibility, whose reach extended beyond the funk balls. Currently he is participating in the Red Bull Studio project along with cultural group Afro Reggae, and often travels on tour outside the country. MC Serginho became known as the author of a highly successful hit of the early 2000's – *Eguinha Pocotó* – which opened doors for concerts, including large national festivals such as Salvador and Tim Festival. Currently he takes part at the Via Show Digital crew TV shows, broadcasted by CNT TV station. For this work, we have also interviewed Furacão 2000's team of DJs and producers .

**I) Contextualizing the “baile funk”**

Addressing the historiographical aspects of funk is not our main goal. As for this matter, we recommend the works of Vianna (1988), Herschmann (2000), and Essinger (2005). Likewise, regarding its contextualization, we suggest the reading of the earlier work of Sá (2006), which discusses the history and consolidation of funk since the 1980's, considering the aesthetic aspects of the genre, its approach to electronic music strategies, and the global cultural exchange that takes place during its consolidation process[[5]](#endnote-5).

Based in these studies, we understand funk as electronic music emerged from the slums and outskirts balls around the city of Rio de Janeiro, keeping close links with its home territories, even though fertilized by an intense movement of global musical flows. It is produced in the studio with the use of drum machines and samplers, and played at balls by "sound systems crews" – as discussed below – with technological equipment and the presence of DJs and singers, known as MCs. This is dance music, with bass grooves enhanced by the speakers, and whose aesthetic value must be enjoyed on the dance floors.

The funk balls circuit extends its reach to virtually all areas of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Balls can be made ​​quite simple, like the ones held in a weekly basis in several communities[[6]](#endnote-6). In these areas, a sound speaker system on the street, a microphone, and a computer as a Netbook are enough to start the party and excite the public. Wherever there is a sports or samba school court within the community, this kind of public facility can be used; otherwise, the ball lasts all night long in the street itself, not causing any problems and with great excitement. But in general, these balls are sponsored by small sound crews. In spite of the danger in these so-called risk areas, that is, areas where criminal gangs commit drug trafficking, the community-sponsored balls are always crowded, and keep on attracting outside frequenters, or people from the “asphalt”, such as soccer world celebrities, for instance, whose presence in the funk parties is highly publicized in the press.[[7]](#endnote-7)

The balls are deeply important for the communities, because they promote the meeting between local residents, welcoming the performance of both old and new funk stars, offering the opportunity for new releases to become smashing hits, and distributing their own CDs, also enabling economic activities indirectly connected to funk music such as beverages and food sales to profit[[8]](#endnote-8).

Outside the communities boundaries, clubs and dancehalls owners after big crews to organize balls in their own venues became commonplace, due to the wide appeal of the musical genre among young people, which ensures a profitable attendance for nightclubs. Therefore, funk balls are held daily in nightclubs, especially around the north and west zones (Zonas Norte e Oeste) of the city. [[9]](#endnote-9) Clubs, concert halls, and samba courts charge an entrance fee, that usually costs between R$2.00 to R$10.00[[10]](#endnote-10), depending on the size of the place and features of the day. The fee for men and women may vary in price, or even be free for women until a certain time. One of the reasons why the balls attract frequenters from the popular classes is because it is precisely a low cost, or totally free, leisure activity, in the case of open-air, courts, and streets balls in the communities. The drinks prices are also usually very cheap, offerings of beer and alcohol drink *caipirinha* double shots for the price of one are also attractive and increase the attendance.

**II - The main funk agents and their business network**

**Sound System Crews**

Funk's production chain main agents are the sound system crews[[11]](#endnote-11), which are responsible for the sound system, and the music played at funk balls. The success of a crew is measured by the amount and potency of sound speakers, usually piled up against the "big wall" (“paredão”) of the ball, and the pyrotechnic effects, such as strobe lights, are highly valued by the public[[12]](#endnote-12).

In general, the crews rely on a hired group of DJs and MCs to enliven the parties. Among the most famous ones there is the Big Mix, leaded by Dj Malboro, and the Furacão 2000, owned by Rômulo Costa, both the biggest names on funk music. Other names like Espião and Curtisom-Rio are also well known in the scene funk.

The Furacão 2000 appeared in 1974, and since then has strived to bring about its very well-known slogan claiming to be the number one in Brazil. The company began its activities by providing sound systems for balls, like so many others, and have managed to significantly expand its business by creating its own record label to release the crew's albuns, besides music production and management for funk artists.

The Furacão 2000 provides the sound system for its 40 weekly balls with their own equipment, using one of the 13 sound systems they have in each place. The equipment transportation is made ​​by 10 trucks, parked at the headquarters in Irajá as it could be observed during the visit carried out during the research. Besides supporting an extensive circuit of balls, a group of 20 employees - including presenter, camera man, lighting and sound technicians, TP operator, editor, and so on - produces in its own TV studio and editing room 5 TV shows per week, which are broadcasted throughout Brazil by means of rented time on Bandeirantes TV Network, from Monday to Friday.

Radio is another vehicle where the crew acts strongly. About 8 employees, among announcers and DJs (who also play at the crew's balls) work at the crew's radio station - 107 FM - and are also in charge for keeping the high audience ratings accomplished by the Furacão 2000 after the program aired by popular FM radio station O Dia, one of the most popular radio station in Rio de Janeiro.

Resorting to Internet possibilities, the crew build a website that hosts content related to the balls weekly schedule, videoclips from TV shows, interviews, images of the balls, new songs, webradio, artists contacts and downloadable MP3 tracks for free.

The music tracks released by the crew's label are produced by employees who work in three studios headquartrse - equipped with high-tech computers, mix consoles, and drum machines. Besides recording production, some of those who work at the studio and radio station performs as DJs at the balls under the crew's name, and play with Furacão 2000's MCs during their presentations. Music publishing is a very significant part among the businesses undertaken by the crew, along with the record label which records and releases its own artists.

Currently, its structure surpasses that of other crews by far, not only concerning the amount of balls that it promotes, but all the activities above listed.

**Djs: Disc-Jockeys**

The funk Dj emerges historically connected to the sound crews and their function is the same as any other Dj from different electronic styles – combining music on the ball's dance floors. However, the Djs work gained greater visibility in the market over the 1990's, arousing the interest, among some Djs, to pursue an independent career working for different crews, and charging higher paychecks, as well as broadening their professional scope by performing also as producers or Mcs artistic managers.  
 However, as pointed out by our informants, it is very difficult to succeed as an independent professional, pursuing a career outside a sound crew. Firstly, because the crews are not interested in inviting independent Djs into their parties. Moreover, because even though it is fully acknowledged that music production is an essential activity so to build a solid and more profitable career, other than being only a funk DJ, but the difficulty of having a well equipped recording studio at hand makes the work of many professionals depend on the structure of a crew. And in spite of the advantages for producing electronic music after the cheapening of personal computers and softwares like Acid, Sound Forge, and Fruity Loops, which can be downloaded from the Internet, being unbound to any crew hinders the distribution of music at balls and to radio programs, especially for beginner DJs – as discussed below.

A third activity pointed out by informants – in addition to djing and music production – is the artistic management of Mcs[[13]](#endnote-13). DJ Batata is an example. Between the years 1997 to 2002 he was, along with DJ Dennis, one of Furacão 2000's highlights. He was working with DJ Marlboro but chose to quit the job with the most famous funk DJ in order to join in the singer Tati Quebra-barraco tours, whose blockbuster album, Boladona, was produced by him. Later, Batata managed to assemble his own studio and became the artistic manager for MC Mingau, among others. The DJ also attends law school so to specialize in copyright issues, since this is one of the controversial topics in the world of funk, as discussed below.

**Mcs: Master of Ceremonies**

In the Funk universe there are basically three types of music track: the assemblies​ exclusively made for DJs, in which pieces (samples) are pasted from different songs and instrumental bases – a very common aesthetic procedure in the electronic music culture (Sá, 2003); the “melôs”, with short lyrics full with double meanings, and rap music, composed and sung by Mcs, who often speak of violence problems in the favelas, claiming for peace in the communities and balls (Sá, 2008), or more romantic lyrics, as in the “funk melody” style. The MC is the agent who is closer to the role of performer/singer in the traditional music industry, singing the funk “melôs” and raps in specific moments of the balls.

A successful Mc usually performs up to five gigs in different balls, in a single night. This is possible because the presentations are usually short, lasting no more than 30 minutes. In this case, they spend much time in vans going from one place to another around the city, and may be accompanied by the respective DJ, and dancers. The payment per gig vary between R$ 150 and R$ 300[[14]](#endnote-14) in Rio de Janeiro, but are much higher outside the state, reaching up to ten times this value, which considerably helps the singers to achieve autonomy[[15]](#endnote-15). The biggest names in funk, that is, the ones who have managed to build a solid career, or get under the spotlight for a brief moment, receiving many proposals for performing in other states or even outside the country, either at Brazilian or electronic music festivals.

Besides DJs and MCs, the *bondes* (“streetcars”) – a group of young men or women, similar to the boy band model – are also very successful. For this kind of group, dancing is a fundamental performance element as well as the choreography performed along a specific song, and clothing, also. According to Batata, the success achieved in the years 2001 and 2002 by Bonde do Tigrão, both inside and outside the country, has opened many doors for this kind of set, that became a watershed in the history of funk. On the one hand, for projecting the artists, and, on the other, for moving big figures, which resulted in fights and separations.

Generally, the figure of the Mc either emerges from the slums or the outskirts in the metropolitan region of Rio, and the connection between the Mc and his local of origin is revealed in the lyrics they sing, and by their permanence in the community, even after accomplishing fame. Usually, they balance other jobs with the music career, or return to their old job after a very brief period of fame. There are countless cases where this situation repeats itself, which reveals that despite the broadness of the funk scene, a career in it imposes many difficulties, and is likely to be quite ephemeral and possibly underpaid.

The respondents attribute several reasons to this. Sany Pitbull and Serginho point out the Mcs (and Djs) "lack of information" on the value of their own work, mentioning the "lack of knowledge about copyrighted works and the need for royalty payments to use samples" as illustrative examples. An unknowingness which results in legal disputes; or cases of Mcs and Djs having no corresponding financial return for their own music hits. According to Serginho, those who have more information try to manipulate the new artists so to explore their work and get most of the profit from copyright and paychecks for the live performances.

However, we rely on the assumption that the funk sound system crews are local versions of "brands", in the case of *electronic forró* music (Trotta, 2010); and "sound systems" in the case of *tecnobrega* music (Castro & Lemos, 2008), that achieved, in both cases, stronger appeal and loyalty among the public as an entertainment experience, than those of the individual singers.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Thus, the MCs subordinate their own images to that of the crews, and after launching new fashion trends in dancing and clothing which are necessarily ephemeral, they are also quickly replaced by other singers.

Therefore, this business model is not based on the notion of individual artistic career (as much as the notions of work and authorship, as discussed below), but in the collective, presential entertainment experience that enhances sociability, dancing and the regulars being-together, and where, thus, the MC is just another attraction along with others. So, whether on one hand they add value to the festival and attracts regulars, on the other, it is the sound crew that creates frequenters loyalty in a more lasting way.

**III- Aspects of the funk business model**

**III.1 - Technological appropriations and dilemmas**

Four years ago, DJ Batata set up his own home studio, with equipment to produce the rhythmic electronic bases and record the voices of the MCs with the aid of the software Pro-Tools. The home studio is considered a "conquest": it was built by an expert (William) - the same person who have created Furacão 2000 and DJ Dennis studios – who carefully planned such aspects as sound insulation, the sound speakers position, and the doors. And it has "everything he needs to produce good quality funk music”, a sub-genre that often does not require the recording of musical instruments.

Stressing out the importance of quality and of the producer role – where he stands next to Marlboro under the spotlight – he mentions the case of Mc Mingau, who showed him a home-made recording which was reworked in his studio, by rerecording the voice and part of the production, surprising the author with the huge difference in quality between both versions.

However, today the musical productions goal is not – as in traditional music industry – selling albuns per units. Their goal is producing a good technical quality track that becomes a hit at the balls, thus allowing the DJ/producer or MCs to earn higher paychecks per gig.

As we insist on the question on how important are record sales for the funk market, Batata replies that he owns a label, but that "it has been a little neglected", for the only record label owners who also own sound crews – like Marlboro and Rômulo Costa – make money out of this product, disclosed at their own crew balls, radio and TV shows, and sold as a collection under the Furacão or Big Mix "brand". In this context, he particularly stresses out the importance of DVDs as a profitable product for the crews, mentioning the group Os Hawaianos as their most recent sales success.

However, for the ones such as himself, who does not have their own crew, the album works as some kind of business card, helping to promote the Djs, whose work then becomes widely known, and so they get to play more gigs. For, as Batata observes:   
"Today, artists aim to make a hit out of one song to play more gigs, so it is difficult to negotiate anything else. The correct way should be making a hit, selling albums, and playing gigs. But nowadays they are only interested in performing live”. This is due to the valorization of funk singers and groups live gigs, which in the past were badly paid, a famous Mc earned no more than 1.000 reais[[17]](#endnote-17) (per gig). Emphasizing the difference seen at the present moment, he mentions Tati Quebra-Barraco's high paychecks, who, "at the peak of her career (2005/2006), charged R$20.000[[18]](#endnote-18) per gig, plus 4% percent over the box office's profit, and yet had no free days left in her agenda."

For the same reason, the peddlers' pirate-CD market is no longer so strong, and is not mentioned by the Dj, who affirms the following on this kind of distribution: “it is good and bad at the same time, if on one hand music circulates more through piracy, on the other hand, the works copyright money is not collected”.

So the Dj believes that music distribution over the Internet lives together with the CD market (legal or pirate), and with the radio, all united on the function of disseminating funk hits, although the ball is the real thermometer: "Once, the path to success for a song was to become a radio hit, and then a hit at the balls. There was an inversion, now the music becomes a hit at the balls, mainly in the communities of Mangueira and Complexo do Alemão , only then reaching the radio and the Internet. As an example, he mentions Mc FB's hit Ui Papai Chegou, that on a single Friday night was sang “10 times at the Mangueira ball, plus other 10 times at the Chatuba's." This way, "it is impossible not to make a hit, singing for 5,000 people. At the Mangueira, he took turns with 4 crews every night”. [[19]](#endnote-19)

Within the context of the Internet usage for publicizing music, Batata indicates the website Funk Neurótico – [http://www.funkneurotico.xpg.com.br](http://www.funkneurotico.xpg.com.br/) – as the most popular distribution vehicle employed by artists, independent producers, and the public. In it, there are Djs/Producers and Mcs profiles, as well as free downloadable music in MP3 files. Exchange of music files, or samples, among the DJs via MSN occur daily.

Other ways of using the Internet is the music files direct distribution for potential “disseminators” – who, in this case, are the other Djs's contact list; besides their own websites, Facebook and Twitter profiles, where each one has about 5,000 followers.

Finally, Batata mentions the importance of mobile phones music sales – especially ringtones for the funk business, citing, as an example, Tati Quebra Barraco's huge success. The track called Boladona, that was part of the Globo TV Network's soap opera America's soundtrack in 2005, collected about R$120.000,00 in ringtones sales, during its first month on the air. Three months later, it was possible to collect over R$110,000, and then R$80,000[[20]](#endnote-20) “because music gets out of fashion, and so less people downloads the ringtone”, explains Batata. However, according to the interviewee, this system yet requires adjustments, since the recording industry and ECAD[[21]](#endnote-21) took too long to warn the artists about the money they were earning from the ringtones.

Another example of how mobile phones provide funk with visibility is the iFUNK-SE application, developed by Sany Pitbul, in partnership with Red Bull, released in August 2011. It is a digital sampler, with exclusive content produced in meetings between DJ Sany Pitbull and Mcs from the hip hop scene. The app allows users to edit and create their own music and beats, with a ready-made musical background as the base and shall be used by 99% of smartphones, tablets, and computers. Multi-platform, the tool will be connected to Facebook and Twitter, providing users with more storage and sharing capacity.

It is worthy noting that the MPC (Music Production Center) is a commonly used equipment in live musical production, combining samples and electronic beats in real time. “The MPC has been in funk for over 20 years, since the *galeras* (“crowds”) festivals of the 1980's. When we started the *montages*[[22]](#endnote-22)(“mash ups”), people called us crazy. Today thanks to our funk, it is a worldwide well known technic, and very used in several musical styles”, says DJ Sany Pitbull.

Based on these initiatives, we can briefly describe the technological appropriation performed by funk agents as extremely innovative and creative, characterizing a flexible business model, also open to the digital music market new experiences and opportunities. By leaving CD sales behind, they anticipate one of the current musical business most important strategies, looking for other strategies to make their own musical work sustainable.

A third aspect tensioned by this model is the register of the works and copyright issues. According to Batata, many begginer artists are only interested in “making a hit”, but they ignore any information on intellectual property. So, Djs and Mcs usually sell their rights over the phonograms they produce aiming to get a more immediate financial return for the new work, or because of the circulation channels the new owners have, and through which they can make the song becomes more famous, and consequently, help these artists to increase their number of gigs. Another common practices are the lyrics and digital compositions on demand, when the rights to the phonogram also can become owned by the one who requested the work. In the Furacão 2000's case, the Djs who produce the new track for the company have no copyrights to it, for in fact they are regular employees, and so are already paid for this job, besides using the equipment that belongs to the company.

Finally, there are usual cases of Mcs who record a new track and register it with a crew's record label, then records the same lyrics with another. According to Batata, this kind of situation leads to many disputes and confusions, since “everyone wants to be the father of a beautiful son”, if the song becomes a huge success.

Batata affirms that after building his studio, he used to charge anyone willing to pay for his recording and production work. But currently he prefers to invest his time writing lyrics, exactly because it is the most profitable activity of the production chain. Still, in many occasions, he, as most funk artists do, needed to sell his author's rights to a record label connected to the crews due to the difficulty of getting the songs in circulation. Yet, he understands that the trade can be interesting, for he gives up the rights to the work, but keep the work's relational rights, under the category of accompanying musician.

For all these reasons, we understand that the notion of “individual authorship” is relativized, made flexible, and tensioned by funk businesses, where the actors negotiate accordingly to quotidien needs' social circumstances and “practical reason”.

**III.2 – Authorship and copyright in funk**

In which manners does funk production circulate? As observed here, the ball is the place where introducing new songs. However, DJs can not or do not want to play everything at balls and radio shows. This is due to sound crews strategies, besides some Djs self-promotion. Within big crews, the artists circulation for gigs is also hindered by the balls circuit drawn by the crew, or by the network of associated smaller crews.

Let's take the examples of the Big Mix and Furacão 2000 crews. In the balls promoted by Malboro's crew, and also at the radio shows aired by them, the only music played is the one produced by his record label[[23]](#endnote-23), or whose production was signed by himself. At Furacão 2000, the same practice is reinforced. The explanation for such attitude is that one might not “help” one's rival crew to succeed, for they could then steal one's own recording artists music space. Batata says he disagrees with this kind of mentality and practice, for he believes that competition is healthy for both sides, considering that the scene, the funk movement itself, is harmed by this kind of split. He explains that this has always happened in funk and that he took a long while to understand why, stating that even in smaller crews, like Mangueira's community, it is not allowed to play different crews music. In his digital assemblages, Batata includes music fragments of several artists, and says he does not care about these restrictions, but that he is only able to do so because he does not belong to any crew at the moment, hence enjoying the privilege of being independent.

Another practice that became fairly popular recently is the recording of spots, also called *carimbo* (“stamp”)[[24]](#endnote-24). When a MC sends his newest song to a DJ, he must also send a recording salluting his own name, otherwise, the track will not be included in the set, and not circulated after all. MC Serginho asserts he is against the *carimbo* and says he has never played such spots announcing his own name at his radio show, for he sees no meaning in “worshipping” a DJ every single time his track is played.

**III.3 – The relevance of the local within the Funk market**

As it was also indicated in the research conducted by Fundação Getúlio Vargas (2008), the funk scene economic relationships are mostly based in trust. Consequently, the association between MCs and Djs became common, in search of a partner who is both known and trustable, who slowly comes to be one's own manager, for instance.

It is, then, a circuit where the social network is an important element, and an assurance for the settled deals, as wells as the interloctors credibility. Therefore, despite the competition inherent to any business, we can understand funk as a horizontally, local, and inclusive organized model, rooted in the community, intoducing an alternative for the insertion of youngsters from working class in the market.

Regarding such aspects, both Batata and Serginho asssert that funk is not an unified aesthetic and cultural movement, particularly due to the reasons of economic nature previously mentioned (such as the disputes between crews), but they acknowledge that eventhough, its amplitude can not be compared to any other Brazilian musical scene, because of the appeal it has among youngsters for over three decades.

Considering funk cultural potential within the communities, recently it was created the most organized initiative to fight for funk professionals better working conditions, consolidating this cultural movement's acknowledgement – the Apafunk, Associação dos Profissionais e Amigos do Funk (Association of Professionals and Friends of Funk) – led by social and politically engaged MC Leonardo. APAFunk aims to “strenghten and unify the movement”[[25]](#endnote-25), and among its merits so far the approval of the law that acknowledges the carioca funk as a cultural movement[[26]](#endnote-26) from Rio de Janeiro.

Despite accusations denouncing the connection between funk and drug traffic, what allegedly would be revealed by the lyrics called as proibidão (“forbidden songs”), funk main agents defend that many youngsters from the communities are inspired by the Mcs and DJs to pursue these careers, which become one more option besides the universe of criminality. In this sense, APAFunk, supported by congressman Marcelo Freixo, claims to the authorities that the influence of funk towards youngster be used to raise citizenship awareness. Together, ApaFunk and Freixo have managed to take funk away from the care of the Security Department and into the Culture Department, and now they attempt to improve the scene's professionals working conditions. Batata complains that although the government has acknowledged funk as a cultural expression, the Culture Ministry itself has never invested in projects related to this musical genre.

**Conclusion:**

When discussing the business model of Pará's musical genre tecnobrega – an also popular and marginal musical genre like funk – Castro & Lemos (2008) indicate as its mostly innovative elements: 1) the appropriation of production technologies (in home-made studios), and reproduction by local agents; 2) the replacement of musicians and record labels for “equipment” – giant djing sound structures, that became the dominant agents in this market – organizing the circuit parties, disclosing its repertoire, and bands, and occupying spaces in radio and TV shows. 3) the open use of copyright, with authors often renouncing to their own rights, in favor of visibility, and more possibilities for record deals and gigs. 4) The social network of kinship and proximity, based in trust, which supports the business.

So, “the constant technological innovation, the sound potency, and the ability to draw the public, realease and consolidate talents, are some of the equipment's trumps. More than this, the mastery of technologies and the very performance skills of the parties spectacle, assure the conquering of space and market leadership. Not only size, but the social network itself directly influences the hierarchy between equipments, main circuit agents, on which the singers, composers, and Djs rely on”. (2008, p. 184)

In this analysis, the authors point out tecnobrega as a “new musical business model”, emerged in the decade of the 1990's, marked by the authors as “open businesses”.

Among this model's features, the authors emphasize:

economically feasibility, copyright and intellectual property flexibilization, production horizontalization, generally in a network; the extension of cultural access; technological contribution for the extension of this access, and the reduction of intermediators between the artist and the public” (Castro & Lemos, 2008, p. 21)

Departing from our previous discussion, we would like to emphasize the proximity of both models, since in funk the centrality of the sound crews organizes the circuit and determines a network that articulates Djs, Mcs, and the community of frequenters called “funkeiros”. And where the technological appropriation, the relativization of copyrights application, the position in the social network and the connection with the community, as seen here, correspond to central elements.

Trotta (2010), by his turn, when analysing the electronic forró circuit, dominated by bands such as Aviões do Forró and Calcinha Preta, also stresses out some strategies, common to the other two circuits: firstly, the idea of “brand”, managed by professional businessmen, who make decisions on every aesthetical and commercial phase: “they choose repertoire, arrangements, sound styles, musicians, performance venues, marketing and publicity strategies, support the whole commercial structure (which includes several payments to suppliers, radio stations, producers, and technicians in general), also managing the whole financial part and logistics, aiming to improve the profits.”

According to the author, “the audience identification with the band's singers is an important element, but it is the “brand's sound experience” fruition itself what expands it; what explains the fact that the replacement of vocalists does not hinders the admiration towards the band or the gigs audience (2010, p. 259)

Secondly, the renounce to copyrights application, once the “main publicizing and musical experience vector is not the album, but the live performance” (2010, p. 258). This way, managers invest high both in the recording and publicity of their products in commercial radio stations, but do not worry about selling records, allowing and even encouraging the free circulation of their music in the Internet – whether through fan communities or the official bands websites themselves.

One third question raised by the author – and that seems extensive to the funk and tecnobrega circuits – is the one concerning the sociological meaning of the notion of independence, since in the three cases, although the production, circulation, and consumption circuit has been constituted in an autonomous way regarding major record companies and the mainstream media circuit, the notion of “independence” lacks opposing elements to the system – either in ideological and economic terms.

This discussion, then, unfolds into the case of the copyrights flexibilization. For, based on our interviewees discourses, it is clear that copyrights flexibilization is not only an ideological “flag”, neither the result of a “rational” decision, consciously taken. It is the result of negotiation and dispute – between MCs, Djs, and sound crews. In the three circuits, therefore, the agents goal is the reward for their investiment and work. What takes place is the negotiation, case by case, based on the “practical reason” of everyday life.

That's how we can distinguish a business model of Brazilian popular musical economy, that, despite each scenes own specificities, approximates funk, tecnobrega , and the electronic forró, based on the aspects above mentioned. A model that, ironically (for these styles detractors), introduces strategies currently described as innovative to deal with the record industry crisis since the decline of material products like CDs and DVDs.

For, even acknowledging that there is no longer one single formula for musical businesses today, elements such as the technological appropriation and the employment of social networks in an innovative way, the copyrights flexibilization, the emphasis on the live performance instead of selling material supports, the production chain horizontalization, and the valorization of labor, local social relationships, and informal market are central elements to new music businesses, foreseen by these musical genres, justifying their inclusion as solid examples of creative solutions within today's entertainment chain.

**Notes**

1. Carioca is a local slang, meaning “from Rio de Janeiro city”. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For further details on the notion of “moral panic” applied to funk see: Freire Filho & Herschmann (2003); and also Herschmann (2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The exception is the groundbreaking research Configurations of the Funk Market in Rio de Janeiro (*Configurações do Mercado do Funk no Rio de Janeiro),* published as a report by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in 2008, presenting quantitative data on this genre production chain, numbers, agents, and the business model of funk. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The M.A thesis: “The Importance of Technologies in the Musical Production and its Appropriation: The Carioca Funk and its materiality” (“A importância das tecnologias na produção musical e sua apropriação: O Funk carioca e sua materialidade”), developed by Gabriela Miranda at PPGCOM-UFF, LabCult (Laboratório de Pesquisa em Culturas Urbanas e Tecnologias), supervised by Simone Pereira de Sá. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The author contextualizes funk in three moments. The first regards its emergence in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, under the influence of the Miami Bass sound, while only playing songs in English in the balls on the outskirts and slums of the city, during the decade of the 80's. The second refers to the period of development of the Carioca style, now with Brazilian lyrics and production, among which the work of DJ Marlboro stood out, along the decade of the 90's. And, the third concerns the enthronement of this genre in the world of circuit of electronic music lovers, due to its similarity to the *electroclash* style and sonority, in the early 2000's, when funk becomes an electronic music sub-genre, as it was "discovered " by international producers such as Diplo and M.I.A., and joined in the cast of Brazilian festivals like TIM Festival. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The employ of the word “community” as a reference to the carioca favelas is of common use in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and hence shall be embraced here in this aception. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Among the most consacrated and traditional community balls, we can list the Chatuba, at Vila da Penha; the Mangueira, at Maracanã (close to the Soccer Stadium) and the one held at the Rocinha slum, bearing the same name, in the fancy district of São Conrado. After communities were occupied by the police force in 2008, implementing the Pacification Police Units (the UPP - Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora), the parties were officially forbidden in these areas for security reasons. In 2010, the first community ball under the UPP occupation was held at the Ladeira dos Tabajaras, in Copacabana neighborhood; then the hills of Santa Marta – in the neaby Botafogo district and Cantagalo, also in Copacabana that were also able to have their balls back. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Accordingly to the survey conducted by FGV (2008), there is an estimated average of 6 peddlers per ball, selling mainly food (snacks and sandwiches), beverages, and candy on street carts, summing a total of 284 people working on a weekly basis in Metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Among them, there is the traditional Castelo das Pedras in Jacarepaguá, the studied area, which since the late 1990's promotes balls from Friday to Sunday, with the crew sound equipment itself, the Castelo das Chamas. By its turn, the Furacão 2000 - the biggest sound crew - occupies different areas of the city, performing balls that range from the Salgueiro Samba School court in Tijuca, to the Via Show, in São João do Meriti. Furacão 2000 alone weekly promotes about 40 balls throughout almost the entire metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. $ 1 dollar; $ 6 dollars. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. FGV's research lists 67 workers involved with sound crews. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Here, as discussed by Lemos & Castro (2008), in the case of tecnobrega music, it is possible to note a “technology cult”, translated by both the producers and the public admiration towards the t echnological paraphernalia. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. This trend is confirmed in the mentioned study by FGV (2008), whereby the DJ's make more money out of music production than playing music in dancehalls. This research states that nearly half the DJs are also MC's artistic managers, earning between $ 1,800 to $ 4,400, or $ 970 and $ 2315 dollars. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Around $ 80 and $ 160 dollars. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. The high value of paychecks charged out of the city of Rio de Janeiro, or the state, is fair because since these venues are far from the local dancehall circuit, the MC rhen is unable to perform more than one gig per night as usual, and therefore, to earn more paychecks . [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Forró eletrônico and tecnobrega are favorites genres among youngsters in the north and northeast brazilian territories. Such as funk, they are stigmatized and associated, by middle-class musical critics, to “bad taste” music. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. $ 530 dollars [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. $ 10.500 dollars [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Mangueira is one most famous slum in Rio de Janeiro where big names in old school samba have emerged. Over the last decade its funk ball was well knew as the best. Its structure was made by four different sound crews until being forbidden by police in 2011, as many slum’s funk ball in nowadays. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. $ 63.000 dollars; $ 57.000 dollars; $ 42.000 dollars [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. ECAD (Central Office of Collection and Distribution) is a private organization composed by nine associations responsible to manage copy rights, collecting tributes and returning profits to the artists. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. *Montagem* is a live made mash up music, created by funk Djs using samplers to djing. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Besides Big Mix, Malboro owns Afegan Produções Empreendimentos, that embraces several production activities, as well as music publishing, including a record label which bears the same name. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Also fairly common in Pará's tecnobrega scene, according to the mentioned work. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. According to Mano Teko, APAFunk vice-president, in interview for this research. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Published in Diário Oficial, in 23rd September 2009.

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    **Interviews**

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    Mc Mano Teko: Lona Cultural João Bosco, Irajá – 7 November 2010

    Dj Batata: Realengo – 13 January 2011

    Mc Serginho – Comunity Radio Station Favela do Jacarezinho, Maria da Graça – 15 February 2011

    Furacão 2000 Sound Crew, Irajá – 16 February 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)