

ESA-4627 Live the Scene! Pop Rock Music Festivals as Renewed Platforms for Economic and Creative Development in Portugal

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Our purpose in this communication is set around three axes:

- **STATEMENT:** to evaluate and understand the importance of the pop rock music festivals in Portugal during the last decade, including a problematisation about its consolidation as cultural and touristic market and its exponential rhythm of affirmation.
- **EXPLORATION:** to identify and analyse the dynamics that preside to its functioning, namely its organisational and functional logics, its programmes, the different actors involved in its accomplishment and its mapping.
- **DEEPENING:** to explain and understand, in the pop rock music festival, the importance of the contours of the sociological concept of musical scene in a perspective of approximation of economic and creative development in Portugal.

1. STATEMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POP ROCK MUSIC FESTIVALS IN PORTUGAL DURING THE LAST DECADE

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MUSIC FESTIVALS IN PORTUGAL IN THE LAST DECADE.

Music builds up our sense of identity through the direct experiences that it offers to the body. Identity is for us a ritual matter. It describes a *PLACE*, a set of interactions (Frith, 1996). Therefore, music is the first *reason to be* for the music festivals, as its fruition in a well-defined spatial context, assumes a considerable relevance.

The great advantage of the festivals resides in the fact of them being RHYTHMIC LANDSCAPES: as the rhythm may be defined as the “lived” segment of the musical experiences inside a space where performers and audience share the music.

Taking into account the gathered data, music comes as one of the KEY FACTORS concerning the explanation of the frequency of festivals. Many frequent the festivals craving for the performance of specific bands, others, nonetheless, frequent them in search of new bands.

A COMMUNITY FOR THE CELEBRATION OF YOUTH CULTURES.

As music, the will to interact with the other (known or not) constitutes one of the main motivations that justify the attendance of festivals - here perceived as an opportunity to socialise and to establish new relationships.

In effect, festivals are assumed as unique and special opportunities for very different people to encounter, something that would hardly happen in other circumstances. **Simultaneously, the sharing of the festival reality and of the taste for specific bands is a motive for the establishment of new relationships.** We can actually talk about the formation of TRANSITORY COMMUNITIES, built upon a conscience of similar tastes and a sharing of experiences.

To think about festivals as COMMUNITIES (Duffy, 2000) leads us not only to consider the interaction established between the subjects, but also the fact that music and musical performances may work as connections between the participants of the festival and the space among which it takes place, promoting the creation of a sense of identity and of identification with these same spaces.

The frequent travels to the places where the festivals take place act, themselves, towards favouring the formation of these communities, communities of identification, associated with the spaces of belonging and of intensification of relationships.

To understand the connections between place and music, the notion of MUSICAL ROUTES is important, as it includes several participants with bonds established between themselves that will therefore originate a sense of belonging (Cohen 1993) - the framing of musical performances.

These are youth communities in both the strict and the broad sense: in the strict sense because the attendees of the festivals ages are between eighteen and thirty-five years old; in the broad sense because the definition of youth in itself has been progressively enlarged, reviving that now classic Boudieu statement: youth is nothing but a word.

The importance that, in a general way, the youth attribute to conviviality can be interpreted as a generational sign proper of youth cultures. It is around leisure activities that youth gains, in a way, its unitary specificity, nevertheless it is equally in the frequency of festivals that we can better understand the different youth cultures and, from here, youth in its diversity.

THE BREAK WITH EVERYDAY LIFE.

Several of the interviewees signal the festival as something completely different and distant from their everyday life experiences. The festival emerges, in this way, as a moment for relaxation and leisure, where the pressures and responsibilities of everyday life vanish.

Hence, we can consider that festivals act as an “emancipatory structure”, or as an “experiential resource”; the attendees may confront themselves with musical and social experiences, make new friends and eventually experience different lifestyles or ways of life. Festivals become, in this sense, moments and places for the liberation of the everyday life constraints, opening the door for new possibilities.

AMBIANCES AND THE PRESENTATION OF SELF

The ambience or atmosphere that surrounds the festival are signalled as an important aspect regarding its experience.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FESTIVALS IN THE HISTORY OF ROCK

It is also important to signal that music festivals have the capacity to create icons and myths in the scope of the musical field, being because of this defining moments, as they write a piece of the history of rock.

During the empirical research, we were able to perceive the perception that the festivals are important channels for musical evolution, being also due of mention the fact that the festivals’ promoters are considered key agents in the Portuguese music

scene. The majority of the bands acknowledges that their participation in an average or large dimension festival was (and will be) important for their dissemination, namely in what concerns to emergent projects, among the audiences, enabling an increase in exposure of the national projects.

RELEVANT COMPONENTS OF THE MUSICAL TOURISM.

They are (unique) spaces for performance that boost the cultural sector, that contribute to the creation of networks between the several actors on the musical field, as well as for the regeneration of the urban areas. Also, they increase the conscience of the local populations in what concerns to cultural aspects. Therefore, we can understand the economic importance (beyond the cultural one) that the festivals can assume.

SYNTHESIS

The festivals are characterised by their ELASTICITY, INTENSITY and IMPACT.

The ELASTICITY is placed among the field of the diversified presentation of musical projects and of activities in a limited period of time.

The INTENSITY relates to the thickness of activities (audiovisual, performative, listening, musical execution, installations, etc.) developed during the period and in the place of the festival.

The IMPACT may be measured by the range of the effects of these events in an internal level (in the event itself), in a local level (in the space - county and city where they take place) and in the programming and occurrence of similar events.

The ENDOGENOUS REPERCUSSIONS of the festivals may focus on the reinforcement of innovative activities in what concerns musical production, on the dissemination of new projects, on the fidelization of publics or on their enlargement at a county, regional, national or even international level. All of these are fundamental aspects for the strategic evaluation of these events.

At an EXOGENOUS LEVEL, they may produce effects on the communities, on their local economy and on the development of formative programs for sound and light technicians... or even the development of support structures concerning the reception of the artists and the rental of equipment's.

2. EXPLORATION: FESTIVALS' DYNAMICS ON THE LAST DECADE

It is possible to recognise an increase in these type of events, and more significantly since 2004 (two thousand four), in Portugal. Therefore, since 2004 (two thousand four), we have witnessed a *real revolution* in what concerns to the number of events. Even though since 2002 (two thousand two) a relatively significant change began to take shape, it is mainly since 2004 that we can verify the major increase in the number of festivals, as mentioned before.

Dynamism of the several event promotion companies.

Right from the beginning, we should acknowledge the increase in dynamism in the several event promotion companies. With singular configurations and geometries (from small local associations, poorly professionalised and DIY driven, to bigger and renowned national promotion companies), they are increasing in number and, while having different rhythms, they have been walking on the direction of a greater sophistication, in what concerns technical, logistical and transportation conditions, what contributes, in a large extent, to the success of the initiatives they promote (Purdue [*et al.*], 1997).

They are interstitial structures subject to a strong financial engineering by having in sight the seek of support from several places. These types of organisations are not alternative, as they do not stand on the margin of the system, they use and move around it. They are also peripheral, as they operate in the core of cultural activities. They are structures endowed with relative flexibility and informality that have been imposing themselves on the portuguese cultural tissue.

FESTIVALS AS CONSUMER PRACTICES

The attendees of the festivals end up, on the majority of times, to form communities of individuals cemented by the consumption of a specific brand. The partner brands that finance the musical events are important as a symbolic element of connection between the individuals that are a part of the musical tribes (Cummings, 2006, 2008). In what concerns to the entities responsible for the financial support of the events we are analysing, the brands are the notorious protagonists with capital injections that can go as far as 50% (fifty percent).

FESTIVALS AS WAYS OF LIFE

In fact, the attendance of musical festivals has become, nowadays, truly a way of life - the “festivaleer” way of life - just as it were a perfect ritual. Festivals are understood as spaces of sociabilities, of discovery, of exposition/affirmation of the self, of sharing of ways of be in face of music. They are, because of this, highly valorised moments by their publics, which procure to perpetuate the sensations triggered by the festival, not only by being present on the several editions of a same festival, but also by creating their own “festival itinerary” (frequency of several national and international festivals) (Cummings, 2006, 2007a, 2007b)

PATTERN OF FESTIVAL TERRITORIALISATION

A territorial pattern of festivals is marked by the notorious concentration of events inside the main urban areas - Porto and Lisbon. More than that, we can verify the occurrence of a greater number of these kind of events alongside the country’s coastline, with a due highlight for the North region, where we can observe an expansion towards the interior, despite the quantitative expression of events not being yet that notorious.

TYPES OF STRUCTURES THAT HARBOUR THESE INITIATIVES

The open air places are the ones that present the more expressive levels, followed closely by the clubs and bars and, further away, by the theatres, cinemas, and youth houses. On the other pole we have the stadiums and the Exhibition parks and the congress centres as the less referred.

DOMINATION OF THE FESTIVAL FORMAT ALL ACROSS THE NATIONAL TERRITORY

At this point it is important to state that the festivals are, by far, the most occurring format (76.5% seventy six point five percent). They are followed by what we can call special events. Events that occur less often both in what concerns the number of editions and the duration the edition itself. They are often associated to the celebration, valorisation and/or dissemination of certain institutions, as well as to the interweaving of new artistic languages and music.

SEASONALITY OF THE FESTIVALS

Rhythms and cadences of occurrence of different events along the year becomes evident. They are more frequent in a broad period between May and September, with a special incidence in the Summer months, July, August, and, more recently, also September.

POLITICAL ACTION, LOCAL STRATEGY

In what concerns the type of entities that support, in the majority of times, these kind of events, the values don't leave margin for doubt. The municipalities are the ones that more significantly support these musical events (35% thirty five percent). We are, therefore, before a clear acknowledgment, by the municipalities, of the potential of these events for the local economic development, as they call attention to the region enabling the exploration of tourism and the retrieve of economical dividends that may appear - so many times essential to the maintenance of the dynamism of these regions.

3. Live the scene! Pop rock music festivals as renewed platforms for economic and creative development

They are social spaces among which the groups of producers, musicians and fans, collectively, share their musical tastes and distinguish themselves from one another (Cummings, 2005, 2006, 2007a; Bennett, 2004).

A scene is a dynamic space with a socio-cultural nature where different musical practices interact with one another in different ways.

Each scene has a specific logic of social functioning. At times, an union logic between the different scenes appears, in order to strengthen their collective energy (Cummings, 2005).

"Festivaleers" have a great sense of commitment, as for many times, going to a festival obliges them to move to distant places for several days, to take time off work, to find lodging and to organise a trip. In another way, the commitment translates itself in the loyalty of the festivaleer, that will come back on the following years to see the festival and its favourite bands (Cummings, 2005, 2007a; Bennett, 2004).

Festivals have, inherently, a robust symbolic relation that facilitates a group of strangers a sense of union, of membership to something bigger (Witeley, 2004). In this we can find cause for the will, of several participants, to take part in the rock community (Bennett, 2004).

In a way, the intensity of the music scene enables the experience of different identities; meanwhile the atmosphere is what concerns the lived sentiments in the experience, i.e. it is the output of the totality of the experience (Cummings, 2005). These two elements must be in balance. The promoters are the ones who create the atmosphere through, for example, the disposition of the spaces or the management of the concerts' schedule (Cummings, 2007a, 2007b).

There is an intense familiarity between the festivaleers, each and every festivaleer knows the other, forming a shared community. This tribe is characterised by seeing in the festivals meanings that go beyond the pleasure provided by the event itself; these are people that attend the festival to see their favourite bands, to experiment new music, to be with their friends or people with a similar mentality, to drink beer and to enjoy the summer time (Cummings, 2007b).

In what concerns the key sociability relations established in the festival, it isn't irrelevant to follow Machado Pais when he says that popular music constitutes a privileged field for analysis of social imaginaries (2010). Therefore, we could perceive the importance of the friendship relations followed by having fun/flirts.

Therefore, the fact that a temporary suspension of the everyday life identity framework takes place based on the notion of proxemics, increases the importance of the assumption of a common identity, of a learned knowledge of how to be in the festival that increases the possibility of a relationship as the distance to the stranger is shortened due to the symbolic and sensual sharing of a common place and time

Hence we can identify the emergence of groups of affinities based on elective affinities that may increase the friendship as omnipresent modality of sociability. Nevertheless, all of this is marked by ephemerality, by the creation of an alternative order to the one that is established, converging in an exception interactional framework. In all of this we can perceive the Simmelian coquetry (1934a). Therefore, coquetting, as key form of demonstration enables the social agents to act positively upon the reality, surpassing the dilemmatic and indecisive nature that hits the individual in its existence.

These events are Summer Festivals but are also music festivals. Even if nowadays is possible to verify an increase among the individuals that live the festival beyond the music, it is also true that these kind of events wouldn't survive without their musical offer. These individuals choose these events specifically, and they choose them from a diversified set of alternatives.

The frequent travels to the places where the festivals take place act, themselves, towards the direction of favouring the formation of the festival communities: communities of identification, associated with spaces of belonging and of intensification of relationships. Simultaneously, we can consider music and the acts as incorporating and giving voice to the relation established between the space, in a way, and in another, as offering, through participation, ways for the individuals to identify and localise themselves (Hudson, 2006).

The festival is a “TEMPORARILY AUTONOMOUS ZONE” and a liminal opportunity for social experimentation: “a festival may be understood as a temporarily autonomous zone where the fragments of symbolic everyday life are suspended, or as a cultural laboratory in which the dominant codes are convoked to enable the formation of experimental identities and neo-tribal ways of sociability, or TEMPORARY *COMMUNITAS*” (Purdue [et al.], 1997:660).

To think about the game of sociabilities in the festival remembers us of the notion of “regime of exception” - of being organised (regime) and programmed out of control (exception), without contradiction in the terms

4. THE FUTURE

- Constant growth in Portugal of the number of festivals and the profits derived from there, accompanying the global tendency.
- The festival market is a solidified and rentable market that belongs nowadays to the world circuit of festivals
- The festival market is an attractive market, due to the low prices and the good weather, for the foreigners that visit it.
- The festival market enabled the creation of cultural habits that didn't exist before

- The festivals exist in greater number but they have also diversified their offer which enables to answer to the demand of several publics (festival boutique).