

The other faces of Music Research:

A look at the research training policy in music of the National Plan of Music for Living Together (PNMC) of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia

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Abstract

Literature on the training of music researchers is ample and copious, abundant in reference material and examples from different times and places. The present work tackles the analysis of an original and idiosyncratic project, in which a Ministry of Culture proposes a training program in music research. Inviting agents and institutions from different backgrounds and territories, the Colombian Ministry of Culture through the *'Pilot Project of Researchers' Training in Music'* (PPFIM) led to a broad debate on music research, in order to strengthen traditional music practices.

Through the critical-descriptive analysis of the documentation derived from this project, this study allows one to appreciate the genesis of this policy, as well as the different positions of the actors involved, the epistemological and political struggle behind the recognition of multiculturalism, the forms of rationality involved in the research-training relationship, and the need for greater coherence in epistemological, methodological, pedagogical and operational matters, which guarantee the formulation of a research policy that is in keeping with the wealth of local social knowledge, as a field of alternatives for open and plural societies more integrated, respectful of difference, and proud of their diversity.

Paper

This poster is part of the research carried out during my MA in Music Education at UCL, which analyses the "Pilot Project of Musical Research Training", created in 2013 by the Colombian Ministry of Culture through the National Music Plan for Living Together (PNMC). This pilot project was created with the objective of enhancing the research training of musicians and teachers of traditional music practices around the country, in order to strengthen their cultural and educational processes and at the same time, to enhance the base of musical researchers of the country.

Initially, the project was successfully developed in six regions of different music traditions, which were defined as "training-research nodes" in where local musicians, teachers and experts from diverse communities (including indigenous, afro and peasants' communities), developed research projects in music, with the support of a general academic coordinator, International experts, and national and local researchers.

For ourselves and for outsiders, it has been striking that the maximum cultural entity of a country, explicitly and directly proposes to intervene in an issue traditionally associated with the higher university scope. However, in a country that possesses one of the richest musical ecosystems in Latin America, comparable only to its remarkable biodiversity and more than 80 types of languages, the commitment of the Ministry of Culture has been the full and explicit recognition of the diverse

forms of cultural life and therefore, forms of knowing that underlie the different social experiences that these musical practices promote; creating conditions for a 'dialogue of knowledge', allowing reciprocal intelligibility, intercultural translation and making visible this diversity as a wealth and core social capital for the development of the country.

What called my attention to this project was the interesting relational dynamics emerged between a public policy entity such as the Ministry of Culture -with all its knowledge of the country through the PNMC-, along with the Academy and the actors of the real practices in the territories. For this reason, the focus of the study was to see what the sociologist Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2009; 2014) has pointed out as "the threads of a network of interests, social experiences and forms of knowledge" that appear as visible tensions since they are representations of unequal distributions of power.

To do this, I designed a "time-line" based on all the available documentary information about the musical policy of the Ministry of Culture, in order to identify the 'genesis' (Muller, 2000), the reason of being of this project and its contexts of influence and practice. On a second basis, I analysed the reports produced by the national and international researchers, the nodes coordinators and the rapporteurs of the different national meetings held. However, what I wanted to highlight today is the continuities and discontinuities found, to deepening on the implications that this study has for the purposes of this meeting:

In all the nodes with different emphasis and at different moments, it was observed:

1. Diverse tensions that emerged during the training-research process, related to the encounter of different forms of musical knowledge production. One form of knowledge coming from the academic research scope and, the other, coming from the musical and cultural practices of these local communities. This encounter constitutes one of the major challenges of this project due to different forms of rationality are manifested here.

As a matter of fact, the scientific form of knowledge production in which music research as a discipline is based on constitutes what Donald Shon has called "technical rationality" in where the professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique. However, this type of knowing, clashes with the ways in which these communities transmit, circulate and appropriate musical knowledge, which poses a reflection related to the research purposes: for what knowing? For what research? For whom? Although communities are keen to keep strengthening their musical practices and communicate about what they know, they are not all motivated to be trained in the scientific form of knowledge production linked to this "technical rationality" of disciplinary tradition, and to be taken as mere objects of study, as Omaira an indigenous music and teacher from Cauca (Colombia) has said.

In this sense, the traditional musician, pedagogue and researcher from the Afro communities of the North Pacific Colombia, Leonidas Valencia, has insisted on the need of comprehending that 'musical practice implies by itself an enquiry act', and its experimental character generates more effective knowledge and useful concepts for the aims of these communities'.

But what is at stake in Leonidas Valencia's call and this debate, is the need of recognising those other epistemologies, these "South epistemologies" (De Sousa, 2009) that underlie these traditional music practices, through a deep comprehension of what Donald Shön (1998, p. 56) has called

'knowing-in-action', a type of knowledge manifested in intelligent and expert action, by the conditions from a local space-time' (De Sousa, 2009, p. 49), an expertise that can hardly be verbally communicated in all its completeness and complexity, by the fact that skilful action is expressed by an orality that often reveals a 'knowing more than can be said'.

This tension raises one of the most important contributions of this project, an ontological, epistemological and even, methodological debate between **scientific** and **popular knowledge**, the forms of production based on **orality** and **literacy**, the **global** and the **local**, the **subject** and **object**, the relationship between **time** and "**territory/place**" (Escobar, 2000), and even put into question the concept of research, researcher, training, and the diversification of forms and formats for the transmission, circulation and appropriation of musical knowledge, an aspect in which the project advanced already and that I studied more in deep through the research.

Taking into account these tensions, a conceptual audacity and a methodological shyness are perceived. In our view, it is necessary to think in a more integral and systemic way about the relation between political, epistemological, and methodological dimensions. Because, richness and depth at one level are not always reflected in the operational and practical decisions of other levels, mainly as regards the methodological designs for training -that sometimes result contradictory with the approaches-. In this sense, a harmonious relationship of this triad would prevent the project from being caught in what Martín-Barbero (2003) defined as the tendency to declare 'abstract inclusions' (conceptual and political) and make decisions that produce 'concrete exclusions'. However, it is worth emphasising the ethical-political consistency evidenced at many points in the history of the project.

On the other hand, questions about the place of orality and the transcendental role of territory/place in the different systems of musical thought, mean an important contribution to the literature on forms of research that have implications both for formal and non-formal training processes in music, in that it invites the design of methodological and pedagogical devices where communities and individuals are recognised, validated and empowered along with their own forms of knowing.

The researchers' training music policy, reflects the sustained effort of the Colombian Ministry of Culture of thinking the educational from the cultural perspective. The permanent invitation to deepen the conceptual frameworks that are at stake for a policy of a hybrid and multi-cultural country and from the recognition of its own sound epistemologies is a key route for integrating academy and communities of practice in all its potency.

In this sense, the value of this project allows asking: Is it possible to advance towards a type of research as a scenario of self-recognition, strengthening of autonomy and self-determination from the epistemological frameworks, beliefs, temporalities, forms of relation and expectations of communities? In the current conditions of discrimination, segregation and lack of social cohesion in the world, can be this type of research and this integration between the public policy, academy and communities of musical practice, a tool of political and civic education in the construction of more just and integrated societies? Could we return to a research aimed at defending cultural diversity and combating social exclusion, discrimination and ethnocentrism in all its forms?

The discussion is on the table. Thanks so much.

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