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CROSSING BOUNDARIES: MIGRANT MUSICIANS IN WORLD MUSIC PRODUCTION IN PARIS

Amanda Brandellero

1. Introduction

This paper forms part of a wider research project exploring migrants' trajectories in the cultural industries, focusing on the dynamic interaction between the cultural industries' typically localised production processes and the global reach of the cultural identities and references on which migrants can draw. Taking the perspective of migrants as 'cultural entrepreneurs', we explore the extent to which the cultural diversity migrants can draw upon is mobilized in their interaction with world music production in Paris.

The resulting portrait highlights how the positioning of migrant musicians in world music markets is shaped by notions of authenticity, imposing a spectrum of readings of ethnic resources and ethnicity, ranging from essentialised to hybrid. It should be noted that this paper fits within a wider explorative research project, with the ambition to provide a detailed analysis and thick description of the matching processes between the supply and demand side of world music.

Qualitative data from interviews with musicians and world music industry representatives (label managers, journalists, concert programmers among others) as well as secondary data specialised media are presented, exploring the following key questions:

In which markets are migrants integrating the world music production scene in Paris?
Which market configurations emerge?

After giving an indication of the methods used in the qualitative data collection, the paper proceeds to set out the background to the current reflection, combining literature on migrant entrepreneurship with current economic geography thinking on the development of cultural industries. The paper posits that opportunities for migrants musicians to participate in the Paris world music cluster occurs along parallel value chains, exemplified in the presence of three market 'clouts': notably community, traditional and contemporary world music markets.

2. Methodology

This research has taken the form of non-directive interviews with key economic actors in the world music cluster in Paris (from the creative sphere, to production and consumption). Starting from recommendations from the City of Paris and Mondomix (a Paris-based world music media company), an initial set of respondents were identified. Following a first set of interviews, further recommendations were gathered and more respondents were contacted using the snowballing method. In total, 33 people were interviewed (see Annex 2), 30 of which through formal interview and 3 through more informal discussions. In order to respect the privacy of these individuals, all interviews have been coded in the text. In addition, secondary sources were gathered, particularly artists' profiles, interviews and biographies, using specialized media (Mondomix and RFI websites) – and mainstream newspapers – (*Le Monde* and *Liberation*).

3. Crossing boundaries: Migrants cultural repertoire and its commodification

Increasingly migrants, particularly second generation, are 'breaking out' of more traditional industrial sectors and into other occupational branches such as producer services and business to business or trade (for a snapshot of the Netherlands, see Rusinovic, 2006; Engelen, 2002). Changes in, on the one hand, the opportunity structure of urban economies and, on the other, in the set of resources that migrants from less-developed countries bring with them, have however contributed to shift in local labour markets (see Kloosterman, 2009), resulting in adjustments to the matching between supply (of labour) and demand (from markets). While these considerations have hitherto been applied to more traditional economic sectors of activity, such as catering, retail and textiles, we would here like to shift the attention towards the creative contribution of migrant to more culture-centred sectors of activity, where we would expect the role played by ethnic resources, taking abstraction of human capital resources, could be significant in terms of the ability to draw upon a diversity of cultural and symbolic content. Some observers have gone so far as to argue that cultural diversity is 'a source of potential competitiveness, because of the positive relationships between diversity, creativity and innovation', particularly when exploring the contribution of ethnic diversity to cultural industries in a broad sense (Smallbone et al., 2005, p.41).

In this context, some groups are more able than others to 'activate' their cultural repertoire, to the extent that in some cases this might even be 'constructed' (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). Some observers have gone as far as arguing that 'immigrant entrepreneurs enjoy an advantage over potential competitors outside the group' and that ethnicity 'can carve out economic niches that foster immigrant entrepreneurship' (Evans 1989, p.951). Migrants therefore can be seen as 'cultural entrepreneurs', building a competitive edge through the cultural repertoire on which they can draw upon.

On the demand side, globalisation effectively broadens consumer demand for culturally exotic and specialised products and services (Collins et al., 1995, p.101). In general terms, 'growing consumer acceptance of, and effective demand for, foreign products, strengthens ethnic minority and immigrant businesses' (Light, 2004). On the supply side, ethnic goods, such as

exotic goods related to the homeland, provide migrants with an opportunity to ‘convert both the contents and the symbols of ethnicity into profit-making commodities’ (Waldinger et al., 2000, p.363). Ethnic content of products ‘can also be created in response to conditions and out of cultural materials in the host society’. There can be a creation of hybrid cultural mix, and expansion of what is ‘normative’ within the mainstream – as can be seen in music for instance, where ‘ethnic’ elements become part of the mainstream repertoire (see Alba and Nee, 1997, p.833), allowing migrants to break out of ethnic market niches into mainstream markets (Ram and Jones, 1998).

The success of world music appears to align itself with the key logic of cultural industry production: that of a quest for constant product innovation in order to respond to the changing tastes of consumers in the ‘North’. This quest follows a logic of consumer taste development, vying for ever more unique and distinguishing experiences, as an expression of status and habitus (Bourdieu, 1979). Foreign products, appealing to a sense for the exotic, acquire a strong symbolic dimension, for their faculty to respond to the demand ‘distinguishing’ products (Haynes, 2005; Kassabian, 2004).

4. World music production in Paris

The interplay between ethnic capital and economic logics of production appears to result in varying levels of accessibility for migrant artists. What comes to light is the presence of three parallel markets for world music production in Paris, with parallel creativity, production and consumption networks. We now turn our attention to the three market typologies, sketching this interplay and exploring the spatial implications of each pattern of musical production.

4.1 Community production

« There are many things happening at the level of (ethnic) communities in Paris, which do not appear on the radar of the average Parisian » (interview n°17).

The community niche offers a spectrum of products, more or less anchored in the ethnic repertoire of the specific community in question. Here we find a range from contemporary music inspired by Western rhythms, to more tradition-inspired sounds, thus placing the niche in between ethnic and non-ethnic products. The ethnic component becomes of secondary importance here: what matters here are the tastes and preferences of the Paris-based community and the country of origin, stimulating creativity. The customer base is strongly linked to the own community, although the geographical scale shows a wider networks of connection across the transnational diaspora.

The first community music shops began to appear in Paris in the mid-1970s (see Winders 2006). Their emergence can be seen as connected to the importance of music in the experience of migrants in Paris: as a sacred ritual, leisure, entertainment element of their everyday life. In some cases, some sounds which had become forgotten in the place of origin experience sudden resurgence in popularity as a result of the migrant experience: « often there is music that has been totally forgotten locally, in its place of origin, but as soon as they are

known in Europe, it gives them back an aura. They start to live again, here and there, it's like a boomerang effect. If we look at the different phases, we've had salsa, the Cuban wave, klezmer music, balkan beats [...] Asian migration has brought fewer sounds with it» (interview n°5).

The musical creativity on which community productions rest comes in fact from 'le pays', the place of origin. This reflects a loose geography in more than one way: the country of origin is at once the source from which to draw inspiration and a reference point when thinking about potential consumers. From the viewpoint of creativity, the sounds created by early generations of migrant musicians were innovative, insofar as they merged traditional performances to advanced studio technology. However, in most cases, the resulting musical styles had been emerging in the country of origin for many years (see for instance Winders 2006, for a recount of early phases of Western and Central African music in Paris).

The struggle for musicians engaging in this form of music production is often one of positioning in relation to notions of "authenticity" and the idea of a pure, immutable sound lodged in a traditional musical style. In some cases however, community music gains an authenticity status in its own right: most notably in cases when the migrant heritage is rediscovered and drawn from by artists who are able to reach a wider audience. One notable example is the album *Diwan* by Rachid Taha, in which he covered a song from migrant musician Mohamed Mazouni, as well as others from artists who were famous in Algeria during the 50s-60s. This album was inspired by a desire to "sing the songs that influence me and pay homage to my culture" (Denselow, 2006).

In some cases, musicians are able to 'break out' of community markets. 'Some artists are able to make the transition to mainstream and reach a wider audience [...] there are some bridges. Small concert venues play a big role in this' (interview n°5). One community record store owner suggested that a musician had more chances of achieving this by presenting a stereotypical image of his/her country (author interview). In another case, a Cap-Verde music producer and record store owner based in Paris proudly stated that there were no Cesaria Evora albums in his record store, since he strove to promote the 'other music' from Cap Verde (interview n°33). The promotion of music also highlights the separation of community networks from mainstream: when asked which media are used to promote music, mainstream Paris-based press and radio are either not cited or deemed inaccessible. In the distribution of world music, we note the presence of "parallel networks, that is to say that artists who fail to sell a single album through the official distribution channels then have concerts at the Zénith three times a year, and it's full» (interview n°1).

While his activity is based in Paris, a local music producer refers to his consumer base as being in Africa: « it's very regional, centred on Africa. We do not have international repercussions. When it's not your own culture, it does not speak to you» (interview n°10). The struggle of community producers and record shop owners to survive was all too well apparent in the interviews. During one interview with an Algerian music producer, a delivery of suitcases arrived. 'If music was profitable, we would not have to sell suitcases' (interview n°11).

4.2 *Traditional music*

Here, the direct link between the ethnic repertoire and music is fundamental: as we will see, this is where the quality of the product lies. These intermediaries, these expert ethnomusicologists appropriate themselves of products with a strong ethnic component and transfer/translate them to a wider audience, outside the community originally connected to these sounds. The target audience here respond to the logic of the ‘quest of exoticism’ mentioned earlier: there is even talk of making music primarily for a ‘white’ audience (interview n°17).

Traditional music is considered here as resting in an ethnomusicologist tradition, where musical expressions are considered as emerging from unique social landscapes rather than from the interaction with external flows. It is focused on the traditional as opposed to the modern, the contemporary, in a binary opposition. Ethnomusicologists opened up an avenue between ‘indigenous production and distant consumption’, emphasizing a sense of ‘endogeny’ of music from tradition (Connell and Gibson 2003 p.20). As a result, in the ears of some critical listeners, “music does not travel well... The further away from its place of origin, the less value it has” (author interview, Traditional music record label manager).

The networks of creativity for traditional music are therefore generally speaking to be found in an ‘exotic elsewhere’. The moment of ‘discovery of creativity’ in commodification of traditional music passes through a network of expert ethnomusicologists. Remembering the early years of Buda Musique, Gilles Fruchaux stated that ‘in the early years, I developed a network of friends more knowledgeable than myself on this or that culture, they alerted me to certain things’ (author interview, Gilles Fruchaux). In the same vein, the Théâtre de la Ville employs a series of expert consultants who scour the world in search for ‘new traditions’ to populate the venues prestigious world music weekly programme. In an interview with the Quai Branly’s music programming advisor Alain Weber, the role of ethnomusicologists and of the voyage as a musical discovery was also highlighted: traditional music is and should remain connected to its original social function and reality, while any adaptation or transition to ‘art for arts sake’ is considered a form of denaturation.

The networks of production of traditional music rest generally speaking within the public sphere. Here a series of key actors have played a crucial role in preserving and cataloguing the world’s traditional musical heritage: this is the case of the Musée de l’Homme (see Wenders 2006), La Maison des Cultures du Monde, with its labels Inédit and Collections Terrains/Fieldwork, Radio France and its Ocora label, as way of example. Private labels engaged in the production of traditional music are rare: one exception is Buda Musique, whose founder, Gilles Fruchaux, recognized that his productions generally had ‘no competition’. Here the separation between culture and the economy appears to reach a peak: “We don’t work in show business [...] we don’t make money with cultural heritage [...] culture is not a commercial product’ (author interview, Maison des Cultures du Monde). Traditional music is seen as offering a window on a culture, on a people, and its target audience as being interested not just in the sound, but also the pedagogic experience proposed.

In some cases, the difficulties in securing a visa for playing in France experienced on a more regular basis by foreign musicians in recent years has meant that some institutions have reviewed their approach to migrant artists based in Paris. « At the Guimet Museum, we gave priority to artists coming from abroad, but gradually, we started seeing that there were very talented artists living in Paris. With the difficulties in getting visas for artists, it created an advantage for artists based in Europe » (interview n°22).

4.3 Contemporary world music

Paris has emerged in recent years as one of the main centres of contemporary world music production. Here a plethora of actors, from the creativity to the production and consumption networks, populate the capital. Here, we fall into a different register: that of more mainstream music and audiences. Music production here does not answer the tastes of a specific community, be it based on ethnicity and/or expert listeners. This sphere includes ethnic and non-ethnic elements. There is talk here of ‘recuperating’ community music (interview n°28), transforming it to match the tastes of a wider audience, or adapting traditional sounds to more modern tunes; of assimilating sounds from elsewhere; of hybrid music, musical mixes. Here the boundaries between *de facto* or taste-based communities become negligible.

For many musicians, Paris is a necessary starting point and/or stepping point in their careers. Mory Kanté from Guinea arrived in Paris in 1984, the first true *griot* to become a genuine superstar in Paris, with his hit single *Yéké Yéké*, a mix of traditional kora, a West African harp-lute, and amplified accompaniment (see Wenders 2006). A Frenchman of Cape Verdean descent named José Da Silva, founder of the Paris-based label Lusafrica, persuaded her to go to Paris where she recorded a new album, *La diva aux pieds nus* (The Barefoot Diva) in 1988. At a concert in Paris, Cesaria Evora « thanks God and France, the first to have made her fortunes, bewitched by her lament » (Daoudi, 2006).

Creativity in contemporary world music sparks from various sources: musicians from the world across have had their fortunes shaped in Paris. Journalists pointed to the fact that many of the musicians that rose to prominence in the 1980s were in a way having their ‘second career’ in Paris, having already established themselves in their countries of origin (Winders 2006 p.72). The academic distinction between heritage/tradition and urban/contemporary music is surpassed: we are witnessing a representative mosaic of living culture (Lecomte, 2006). Contemporary world music can therefore be defined as spectrum of sounds, from modern adaptations of traditional pieces to hybrid forms combining diverse musical traditions. In the spirit of hybridity and creation of new sounds, The organiser of the festivals Musiques et Jardins and Jazz Nomades in Paris, argues that: « there is no boundary between more popular and more cultured things, especially since there is a real artistic process, a search, with strong human encounters between high level musicians, more traditional musicians, and others who come from the streets but who work hard and all » (interview n°13).

Often artists are seen as ambassadeurs of their musical culture. This is at the same time an opportunity and a challenge. Some artists are faced with a stereotypical image of what this role of ambassador should imply: some refuse to adopt a ‘traditional costume’ when playing

to appear more authentic in the eyes of a Western audience (interview n°23). Others produce different versions of the same album, one for their country of origin, one for Western ears, as is the case of Youssou n'Dour.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The paper has posited the presence in Paris of parallel market clouts of world music production, with their variable geometries of actors and shifting geographical scales. This has highlighted differing openings for migrant musicians based in Paris, in terms of the scope and extent of markets and demands shaping their music. These clouts are positioned along a continuum ranging from 'scientism and awareness of world music as the product of cultural difference' on one end, to a site of 'spectatorship, through its emphasis on visual and on music drama, and for world music as entertainment, through its gestures to cosmopolitan consumers' (Bohlman 2002, p.32).

The research found three market clouts in which migrants can potentially operate: here the dynamics of creativity, production and consumption diverge significantly, though the boundaries fluctuate, allowing for bridges, breaking in/out of market niches, but also for appropriation of styles or musicians originally associated with one market by another. Innovation in each market sphere comes from diverse sources and geographical scales, ranging from locally anchored communities to the discovery of 'new traditions' by musicologists.

The mediation of 'authenticity' in world music appears to be the key to market entry for migrant musicians based in Paris, imposing a spectrum of readings of ethnic resources and ethnicity, ranging from essentialised to hybrid. As a consequence, the ethnic repertoires mobilised by migrant musicians offer a competitive edge, which is nonetheless confronted with varied logics of music production. Here the interpretations vary: what is authentic *au pays* might not be deemed as such by expert ethnomusicologists in quest for pure sounds. As a result, a migrant musician making self-defined as making traditional music might find his/her avenues blocked in the 'traditional music market niche', while opportunities might abound among community or contemporary world music productions. The ability of migrants to be bearers of innovation in a musical sense appears to increase as we shift away from a more purist, traditional reading of world music. In a strict sense, migrant musicians appear to be at a disadvantage when attempting to break into a traditional music market, as creativity, production and consumption are ruled by stricter commodification standards. Here expert ethnomusicologists and public institutions act as 'intermediaries' in middlemen markets, offering products high in ethnic content to a widely non-ethnic audience. The geographical distance between migrant musicians and the place of origin of the ethnic repertoire they mobilise is seen here as an insurmountable issue. As a result, the traditions brought by migrants are at best ranked as second rate.

The boundary of commodification appears to be lower for community and contemporary world music production, with greater opportunities for migrant musicians to gain access to local and international audiences. Musical innovation here comes from different geographical

scales. Outcomes in the former appear to be shaped by trends and fashions set *au pays*: markets are more compartmentalized, reflecting forms of ethnic niches, separated by country of origin or musical style. Being in Paris offers a certain advantage, an 'aura': images of Paris are often used in community productions, making Paris a key ingredient in the music. Musicians here are able to tap into a transnational community consumer base, but rarely break out to a wider audience. The way music is produced and consumed here makes it less directly accessible to a wider, 'Western', audience. When bridges and cross-overs occur, these are usually the result of an adaptation to Western style and sound canons.

Contemporary world music emerges as offering the wider and more accessible market opportunities. As a result, this market sphere offers numerous opportunities for Paris based migrant musicians. Here innovation based on hybridizing sounds, revisiting traditions or simply serendipitous encounters proves highly valued. The quest for exoticism constitutes a driving force in this market, yet within a looser framework for musicians to express their music. Considerations of a wider audience appeal and commercial success do however in some occasions impose requirements to adapt music to 'Western ears'. The innovation brought by migrant musicians is therefore often 'mediated' by experts, journalists, producers based in the capital, who have a feel for what might 'work' and what might not.

As the crisis of the music industry imposes a structural reevaluation of how music is produced, distributed and consumed, the three market clouts are faced with challenges of their own. For musicians, be they migrants or not, this poses a key questioning about the links between creativity and its commodification. As we talk about the crisis of intermediaries, labels and production companies, musicians are discovering new ways of producing their music and reaching a certain critical mass of followers.

For some, the fact that world music in general is highly visible in Paris, given the presence of a production cluster and many concert venues, is a potential source of social cohesion and integration of migrant communities, as their cultural heritage and traditions are valorized through the commercialisation of their music (interview n°8). Even though this line of reasoning might be flawed, it is clear that the dynamics of production in the world music cluster in Paris answers to economic, spatial and cultural logics which are far more complex than a simple valorization of the diversity of local populations.

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¹ Traduction du Néerlandais: 'Migrants créatifs? Une analyse conceptuelle du rôle des migrants dans les industries de la culture'

Annex 1: list of interviewees

Nom	Description
Abaji	Musician
Benoit James	Quai Branly Museum
Blaise Merlin	Festival/Salle (Association L'Onde et Cybèle)
Chébli Msaidie	Artistic director and musician
Cherif Khaznadar	Director, Maison des Cultures du Monde
Clélia Harbonnier	Frochot Music, Syllart
Diego Pelaez	Musician
Eliane Azoulay	Télérama magazine world music critic
Emile Dessantos	Record shop manager and Congolese music producer for Glenn Music
François Essindi	Musician
Gérard Violette	Théâtre de la Ville
Gilles Fruchaux	Buda Musique label manager
Herve Bordier	Coordinator Fête de la Musique in Paris
Herve Breuil	Olympic Café manager
Hubert Laot	Guimet Museum, auditorium manager
Laurent Bizot	No Format lable
M. Kebe	Lampe Fall, record shop owner and Senegalese music producer
Maïté Dhelin	LMC Production, tour manager
Marc Benaïche	Mondomix Director
Méziane Azaïche	Cabaret Sauvage concert venue
Morhand Anemiche	Creativ Productions (Kabyl Music)
Morhand Dehmous	Resident of the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood and former Kabyl music producer
Nago Seck	Musicologist
Nobuko Matsumiya	Musician with the (Japanese) Ensemble Sakura
Philippe Conrath	Africolor Festival and Cobalt label director
Philippe Gueugnon	Satellit Café programmmer
Rémy Kolpa Kopoul	Radio Nova critic
Saïd Assadi	Accords Croisés label manager (Arab music, traditional music)
René Sanchez	Cap Verdian record shop and Tropica Music productions manager
Simon Veyssière	Press attaché
Sophie Guénébaut	Director of Zone Franche
Sylvain Soufflet	Association Loin des Machines
Mme Zhoulekha	Kabyl record shop manager and music producer