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Ron Martinez

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# The Idea of a Writing Center in Brazil: A Different Beat

*Ron Martinez*
(Center for Faculty Excellence, University of Oklahoma)

**Abstract** This article explores the emergence and development of writing centers in Brazil, using the author's experience founding the Centro de Assessoria de Publicação Acadêmica (CAPA) at the Universidade Federal do Paraná as a case study. The author provides some historical context about Brazilian education and its traditional "banking model" of education (Paulo Freire) that did not value individual expression—including through writing. This model persisted even as composition studies evolved elsewhere. Academic literacy development in Brazil is thus a relatively recent phenomenon, and the effects of that paucity are felt among scholars in higher education settings. This motivated the author's research into publication challenges faced by Brazilian faculty and graduate students, which revealed a need for more institutional support. This inspired the idea for CAPA, conceived as a space promoting dialogue around writing, not just language editing. In establishing CAPA, critical considerations were the use of a public call mechanism familiar to Brazilians ("*o edital*") to make consultations part of the writing process, offering translation to draw more people from around campus, and conducting outreach that stressed writing over "English." CAPA's mission to foster academic identities and combat epistemicide makes it unique, but also gives it a very Brazilian flavor. Unlike some writing centers in other global contexts, CAPA was not an imported idea but emerged from local needs, fully integrated with Brazilian higher education culture, compatible with Brazilian understandings like critical pedagogy. CAPA represents a Brazilian innovation contributing original knowledge to international writing center conversations.

**Keywords** writing centers, decolonization, Brazil, pedagogy, international

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"This is an essay that began out of frustration"—so began Stephen North's seminal "The idea of a writing center" (North, 1984, p. 433), in part because he felt much of academia misunderstood writing center work. But, as he added, "misunderstanding is something one expects—and almost gets used to—in the writing center business." Recently, I have felt that frustration and misunderstanding around writing center growth in Brazil.

For the purposes of context, I ask the reader to indulge me in a very brief sojourn inside Brazilian musical history, specifically bossa nova. (To enhance the experience, I suggest playing "Corcovado" here, as ethereally intoned by the late Astrud Gilberto.)

The story of the emergence of bossa nova in Brazil is a compelling one. Bossa nova roughly translates as "a new vibe" or "a different beat," and that is what pioneering musicians such as João Gilberto and Tom Jobim

were looking for: a more relaxed alternative to Carnivalesque samba.

Although bossa nova is derived from the very Brazilian samba, there is also no question that it was influenced by American jazz. In fact, there is a fairly long list of notable Brazil-USA musical collaborations, such as João Gilberto with Stan Gaetz, Tom Jobim with Nelson Riddle, and Astrud Gilberto with Frank Sinatra. Indeed, it was through many of those partnerships that bossa nova became better known in the United States (and worldwide).

With that backdrop, you can imagine an American—or Canadian—unfamiliar with Brazilian music history assuming bossa nova was *copied* from jazz. In actuality, though, there is no question that bossa nova is a genre in its own right, that while infused with a hybridity of American jazz colors (and other genres), it is a Brazilian signature sound birthed from local heritage.

One could say that bossa nova exemplifies Homi Bhabha's Third Space theory—a postcolonial conceptualization of identity and community formed through hybridity and intermixing of cultures. As Bhabha describes, the Third Space generates new understandings that exist between binaries, and "by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994). Bossa nova resides in a Third Space as it artfully blends American and Brazilian influences into something beautifully new.

In a similar way, writing centers emerging in Brazil have their own distinct history and approach. Knowledge of American models certainly inspires aspects. But Brazilian writing centers arise from local needs and contexts. They carry a localized beat, a Brazil-born rhythm and style. Yet they can get mislabeled as mere imported replicas of North American writing models.

I therefore want to walk the reader through the emergence of writing centers in Brazil, focusing on my experience founding the Centro de Assessoria de Publicação Acadêmica (CAPA, or the "Academic Publishing Advisory Center") at the Universidade Federal do Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil. That background should reveal CAPA and other contemporaneous centers' true roots, which, just like bossa nova, are grounded in a rich hybrid blend of soil that is unmistakably Brazilian.

## "*Desde que o samba é o samba é assim . . .*": A Pedagogy Oppressed

First, some essential history on Brazilian higher education shaping writing center development. Before the 1900s, there were no universities in Brazil and only a tiny elite attended universities abroad (most often in Portugal and France). It was only in the early twentieth century that Brazilian universities began to emerge, most founded as public universities (both federal and state) with limited autonomy. Thus, not only is higher education a relatively recent phenomenon for such a large and influential country (Brazil regularly features in the top twelve in GDP, for example), for centuries Brazilians mostly looked to other countries for erudition. It would be a fair assessment to say that local knowledge was not valued.

This assessment would be one with which Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire would likely concur. Freire believed that teaching anything was a "political act" in the sense that there existed only one kind of recognized knowledge in the education sphere, sanctioned by those with power. He critiqued what he called the "banking model" of education in Brazil, in which the heads of learners were merely accounts into which to deposit the knowledge of those in power. Since higher education (especially in Freire's day) was still very recent, the majority of university professors had been educated in or at least heavily influenced by institutions abroad—thus perpetuating the colonial tradition of importing knowledge and imparting it to an elite class. Local knowledge, and indeed students' own experience, mattered little. Unfortunately, once the military government assumed power in Brazil in 1964, anyone with ideas construed as subversive or "socialist" came under scrutiny. Freire was one of them.

Freire's exile meant substantial educational reforms stagnated, leaving the traditional banking model firmly entrenched. This also meant that students rarely if ever were asked to express themselves, and that included through writing. The more writer-centric

movements in rhetoric and composition pedagogy that began to emerge elsewhere during the same time Freire left Brazil, such as the process movement in the late 1960s that valued the individual writer as a creator of original ideas, were not given space to flourish in Brazilian education. Again, students were conceived of as objects into which to deposit knowledge, and assessment of mastery of that knowledge did not require elaborating one's own thoughts and expressing one's own ideas.

To a large degree, this conception of knowledge transmission persists today in Brazilian higher education, where freshly graduated high school students must declare a major and stick to it throughout their college years. Freshmen do not have an initial period in which they are required to take courses in an array of disciplines, but instead are tested into specific majors and dive directly into core subjects in those programs. Whereas students in the United States, irrespective of declared major, must take general education courses that can aim to develop critical thinking and communication skills, no such system exists in Brazil.

This brief explanation of the nature of Brazilian higher education is important to understand why writing centers did not develop in that country, and why composition skills have traditionally not been a focus there. In the United States, writing centers emerged as a support for undergraduate students who needed extra help with their college writing. No such exigency existed in Brazilian higher ed, or high school for that matter. In fact, Brazilian students have often told me that the only time they received any specific instruction on writing was to prepare for the (formulaic) five-paragraph essay portion of the college entrance exam.

As I would discover as a professor in Brazil, that lack of attention to writing never really changes.

## "*Ah, por que estou tão sozinho? Por que tudo é tão triste?*": The Publication Plight of Brazilian Scholars

Let's fast forward to my arrival at the Universidade Federal do Paraná, where I was hired as assistant professor of English in the Modern Languages department in early 2015. Prior to my job interview, I knew I would be asked what research agenda I would bring to the university. At the time, my research at my previous institution had centered on applied linguistics, more specifically on vocabulary acquisition. Yet moving from an American university to a Brazilian one also seemed like an opportunity to revisit my scholarly pursuits.

One interest that had been forming was in writing for research publication, in particular among non-native speakers of English having to work in that language. That interest had emerged because I was a member of the editorial advisory board of a well-known applied linguistics journal, and at one of our meetings I had been shown a table that listed countries from which we had received manuscript submissions. I saw that none had come from Brazil.

The fact that Brazilian researchers were not submitting their work to this journal was a surprise to me. I had lived in Brazil on and off for several years, and I knew colleagues whose research would be a good fit for the journal. When I asked a few of them about it, the response typically was "it's too hard" and "my English is not good enough." Yet, having served as reviewer and editor for a few different journals I also knew that, while standards are demanding, the research of my colleagues was certainly not below those standards. Furthermore, I also knew that quality research was rarely rejected solely on the basis of English not being "good enough." And there was no shortage of studies that basically agreed with that (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2001, Gosden, 1992; Hyland, 2016).

So my research agenda was decided, and after my hire I set about investigating the beliefs that Brazilian scholars espouse while in the process of writing and attempting to publish their research. Recruiting participants and collecting data proved easy. Faculty came out of the institutional woodwork asking if I, a "native speaker," could check the English in their papers. "Yes," I would say, "as long as you let me interview you about it." Thus, in the first several months at my new university I looked at several professors' and doctoral students' manuscripts (some still unsubmitted, others

requiring revision and resubmission, and still others rejected), along with any reviewers' comments, and also interviewed the authors about their experience. This research culminated in a paper (Martinez & Graf, 2016) that provided a few notable insights, ones that would plant the seed of what would eventually become CAPA.

The first insight was that Brazilian researchers (faculty and doctoral students) focus too much on English. In my interviews, participants regularly blamed their inability to write to a high standard of English as the main reason for not being more successful in their publication endeavors. Yet in analyzing what editors and, especially, reviewers often wrote, that attribution was not surprising. Phrases like "seek the help of a native speaker of English" were ubiquitous. It was no wonder, then, that participants also reported paying for editing and translation services. However, the authors in my interviews also often complained about these services because even after engaging them their manuscripts still came back with negative editorial decisions. A more careful read of reviewers' comments often showed that what the Brazilian authors saw as important ("English") was actually not the chief concern among reviewers, who would often write things like "needs more critical discussion"—and such comments often went unaddressed.

Another salient theme reported in that 2016 paper is "pressure." Over and over again, faculty and their doctoral students expressed a great deal of angst over the whole publishing ordeal. The professors would complain of receiving constant pressure to publish from the chairs of their departments. In Brazilian public higher education institutions—which are the most research-intensive in that country—tenure-track faculty are hired to teach only at the undergraduate level; faculty must apply to be accepted as members of a graduate program. Graduate-level research is thus considered a privilege, which can be lost if a researcher fails to meet minimum levels of production (e.g., at least four published articles) in any given year. Moreover, since journal "quality" matters (with impact factor as a main criterion), faculty complained that more and more they were being forced to publish in English since even a majority of Brazilian journals had begun requiring at least an English version of all submitted manuscripts to increase their impact factors and compete internationally. Thus, for faculty to meet those high-volume publishing demands (so I learned), they enlist as many of their doctoral and even master's students as they can as co-authors on papers. These students would gladly oblige, I discovered, since they too were being coerced to publish by their graduate programs, many of which required proof of acceptance of at least one article as a graduation condition. Furthermore, perhaps because their faculty advisors were being so overstretched, many grad students complained that their professors never talked to them about early drafts, and often only looked at their manuscripts just before submitting, at which time they would receive an aggressively reworked article without any discussion about why changes were made.

Finally, and perhaps of greatest relevance to this *desabafo* ("venting") here, faculty and student participants alike recognized that, as they would often put it, it was the graduate students that "*carregam o piano*" (or *do the heavy lifting*, but literally "carry the piano") of writing for publication in Brazil. And they also reported that they all felt left to their own devices in that lifting, with little to no institutional support. I actually conducted a corpus analysis of the student manuals of ten different graduate programs: words like "publish" and "article" were everywhere in the data; the words "write" or "writing" did not appear once.

Thus, what became very evident in my research was that, irrespective of who was "carrying the piano" in Brazil, there weren't many who were learning how to play it or even appreciate the tunes.

## "*Um cantinho, um violão*": The Idea

At the end of 2015, I presented my research at the PRISEAL conference in Coimbra, Portugal. PRISEAL stands for Publishing Research Internationally: Issues for Speakers of English as an Additional Language. (Yes, a mouthful.) That conference only happens every three years, so

it was quite the opportunity. For me, the opportunity was less about a venue to talk about my research, and more about a chance to hear what others were doing around the world within this theme. I thought I might be able to find solutions to the problems I'd found in Brazil. Although there was an abundance of exciting research presented, there was little in the way of proposals for institutionalized strategies to support writing for publication for EAL scholars.

On the fifteen-hour journey back to Brazil, I couldn't stop thinking about something one of the presenters had mentioned. In his institution in Japan, he reported, there was a translation center, so not knowing English was a nonissue. The faculty at that institution simply wrote in Japanese, and the translation center would do the rest. The writing pedagogue in me had bristled at such a suggestion. After all, my research had shown that although English was a main concern among Brazilian authors when writing for publication, a larger issue was a lack of what Hammond (2017) refers to as "literate talk" around writing. Translation alone does nothing to help that. By the same token, there was something attractively liberating about taking "English" off the table as a barrier. So an idea began to take shape, somewhere over the Atlantic: What if there were a center that could do that? What if, instead of outsourcing academic literacy by paying for third-party editing and translation services, the Universidade Federal do Paraná had a center that did that internally? But, I thought, what if instead of that being the main feature of the center, editing and translation were merely the impetus to interest authors in meaningful engagement with their texts and development of their writerly identities, particularly at the doctoral level where such engagement is crucial (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019)? Could we create a space with a focus on the process, and not a product in which they had little authorial involvement? Oh wait, I remembered, there already is a model that does something like that.

So when I got home, I checked our university website to see if something like a writing center already existed there. It did not. I called my department chair. "Is there a writing center here?" She had never heard of one. "Okay," I said, "how can I create one?" She did not know, but referred me to a vice provost who could help. That provost instantly saw the value in my idea. "What do you need?" he asked. A line in the song "Corcovado" played in my head: "*Um cantinho, um violão . . .*" (roughly, "a cozy little corner, an instrument"). So I replied that all I needed was a space, and a table with chairs.

Reichelt et al. (2013) describe a similar scenario in the creation of a writing center in Poland (though with important differences, which will be picked up on later). The advice the founder of that center received was that all one needs is "a table, two chairs, and a couple of sharp students" (p. 277). So I also asked for a couple of sharp students. And just like that, the vice rector of the university also allotted three student fellowships to the project.

Clearly, there was something Faustian afoot. To what was this largesse owed? Bourdieu would have pointed to the obvious (i.e., cultural capital), and I was of course aware of this. I was also aware of my strategic approach when pitching the idea to administrators. I would often leverage the perceived need to publish—itself driven by hegemonies overwhelmingly located in the Global North (Canagarajah, 2002)—to at least provide the space to engage in writing praxis in a Global South country.

So we cashed in the cultural capital, got the *cantinho*, and got to work.

## "*Muita calma para pensar, e ter tempo para sonhar . . .*": Planning the Center

The "we" in the previous paragraph includes Eduardo Figueiredo, who was a central figure in the early days of our writing center project. Even though I am a permanent resident of Brazil, I am a foreign American, and also a native speaker of English. I wanted to avoid those things biasing my decisions, and I also wanted to minimize the association of the writing center with precisely those things ("American" and "English"). Eduardo was a good friend and esteemed colleague, but also an established researcher whose work

centers on critical pedagogy, decoloniality, advocacy of plurilingual practices, and anti-racist discourses in general (e.g., de Figueiredo, 2021; de Figueiredo & Martinez, 2021; Martinez et al., 2023). It was for these attributes that I invited him to be the founding vice director of the center.

To my delight, Eduardo accepted. Together, we took the issues and themes raised in my 2015 research and dreamed up a center for which we had essentially received *carta branca* to build together. I had plenty of ideas, and Eduardo would play Jiminy Cricket, encouraging *calma para pensar* ("calm to think") and not just *tempo para sonhar* ("time to dream"):

Me: "We will be about dialogue around writing (not 'English')!" Eduardo: "How will the community know that?"

Me: "I hope that many people come to us!" Eduardo: "But why will they come to us if we don't do translation?"

Me: "We can eventually offer translation too!" Eduardo: "Who in the world will do that?"

Me: "If we offer translation we can draw more people!" Eduardo: "How will we control the volume?"

And so on.

To address the first question ("How will people know what we're about?"), we planned to offer a series of events and workshops that would reinforce our identity. In the first months we would offer a write-in event for grad students. Right after that we would invite a Brazilian speaker who specializes in mental health in the doctoral dissertation process. We would stress the word *escrita* ("writing") and avoid mentioning "*inglês*" in all our public communication. (See example in Figure 1.)

For the second question—the feasibility of translation—I knew that until we offered translation our center would not reach the broad audience we hoped for. We agreed we would offer one-to-one tutoring for the moment, but would plan to offer an elective course on scientific and technical translation in the next semester. That way, students who by the end of the course might be so inclined and interested could be recruited to be our first writing center tutor/translators. (More on them soon.)

But it was Eduardo's last question that had us both stumped. Until one night it came to me. I called him up and blurted out, "*Edital*!"

**Figure 1.** One of our first public events: "Mental health and writer's block in grad school: Theoretical and practical concerns for a more satisfying academic life."

In Brazil, an *edital* (plural: *editais*) is something all academics, from undergraduate students to seasoned faculty researchers, are very familiar with. Brazilian university life would cease without *editais*. I was hired through an *edital*. Students wanting to get into grad school wait for *editais*. Faculty jump at *editais* for research opportunities abroad. Departments apply to *editais* for new equipment. Although *edital* can be translated as a kind of "public notice" or "call," it is much more deeply encoded into university DNA in Brazil than any North American analogue. It is a bureaucratic control mechanism for just about any opportunity offered through a public entity. It establishes the dates of when an opportunity opens and when it closes. It lays out terms and conditions. It decrees who can apply and who cannot. It is intended to provide transparency and fairness. And it is an instrument that is respected.

I'm droning on about the *edital* because it ended up being so central to who we became. It permitted us to not only restrict our purview (for example, stipulate what kind of texts we could work on) and control volume (for example, how many times a person can book), but since the creators of an *edital* can stipulate basically any rules they want, we could leverage it toward the true mission of the center. Thus, in the *edital* we would emphasize that as a condition for providing any kind of editing or translation work, the student must first visit with us to talk about their text. Further, no student would be able to simply engage our services without involving their faculty advisor. If the student was working on a paper for submission, then the supervising professor had to come in too. In the *edital*, we would stress that we were not an editing or translation center, even though one final outcome might be the result of those activities. Above all, requiring consultations before text feedback built awareness of our developmental approach, thus further addressing Eduardo's first question above.

The *edital* is one example of what made the center uniquely Brazilian, one sustainably integrated into the local academic ecosystem. But there's so much more.

## "*Se você insiste em classificar . . .*": A Different Writing Center Beat

We opened our doors in October 2016. We called ourselves a "writing center," but most North American universities would probably have to do a lot of squinting to classify us as such. The texts we worked on were almost exclusively research article manuscripts. We did not cater to undergrads, but we only had undergraduate tutors. The tutors were actually tutors/editors/translators. We worked on texts in at least two languages. And yet, returning to Stephen North and his seminal work, a writing center is not defined by a specific modus operandi, "but in terms of the writers it serves" (North, 1984, p. 435). If, as North also asserted, a writing center is a place that provides "opportunities to talk with excited writers at the height of their engagement and their work," then CAPA was such a place.

There was no mistaking, though, that we were different, and that became very clear on the rare occasions we made contact with the North American writing center community. For example, I joined the "Directors of Writing Centers" Facebook group at some point, hoping to find camaraderie. After all, I directed a writing center! At once I felt like a soccer fan who had never been to a baseball game. And when three American students came to our university through the Fulbright English Teaching Assistants program and wanted to get involved in CAPA—perhaps thinking they could teach us a thing or two about writing center practice—it was they who had a steep learning curve.

And then there was the time the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the U.S. Department of State sponsored six American writing program administrators to offer a webinar series on writing centers, aimed at a Brazilian audience. At the time, I was in the process of creating a new network of writing centers in the state of Paraná. Years before, the state universities there had shown interest in CAPA and wanted something similar and so, in the middle of the pandemic, we were able to launch the Academic Writing and Research Development (AWARD) program,

made possible by two large grants awarded by the Superintendência Geral de Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior of Paraná and the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia. The RELO officer thought a webinar series would be a good way to raise awareness of the initiative.

The series itself can still be viewed on the "Writing Centers of Brazil" Facebook page, but what was remarkable about the whole thing for me was how distant the speakers' perspectives were from the Brazilian reality. To be honest, I was actually excited about the series when it was announced and strongly encouraged the student team at CAPA to attend. Most did. But when I asked them about their impressions at the next team meeting . . . crickets. One student commented, "*O que a gente faz aqui é muito diferente, e muito melhor na minha opinião*" ("What we do here is very different, and much better in my opinion.") . . .

It was sometime after that moment when we all stopped trying to find what we had in common with the North American writing center community, and instead embraced our own unique beat. For although of course there are interests we all share (e.g., peer tutoring practices), the lens through which we operationalize those interests can be very different. For example, we have tutor training just like any writing center. But I doubt that most tutors in North American settings have heard of the notion of *epistemicide*, and even if they had, they would probably not easily grasp its relevance to peer tutoring. And yet, one of the most motivating readings CAPA tutors have in their training is the article "Epistemicide! The tale of a predatory discourse" by Karen Bennett (2007). Why? Because Bennett talks about how people who work with texts destined for publication in English can inadvertently contribute to the killing of the knowledge system of an entire culture (i.e., epistemicide). She also suggests that such people can nonetheless empower themselves and others to subvert epistemicide (Bennett, 2013). So when a Brazilian student or faculty member comes to the center and says "Brazilians don't know how to write," CAPA tutors hear that self-deprecation with warranted concern. And as an opportunity.

## "*Meu Brasil brasileiro . . .*": A Brazilian Brazilian Center

A recent article published in this journal referenced writing centers outside North America and characterized many of them as exports. The authors of that article are right to be concerned, as this too can contribute to a kind of epistemicide. Indeed, examples of neocolonial tendencies can be easily found. This is especially the case in places where there is a focus on a product that is in English (e.g., Reichelt et al., 2013), and simply taking a North American idea of a writing center and trying to impose it on a local context is problematic.

Tomoyo Okuda (2019), for example, cautions us against what she calls "policy borrowing," or "implementing successful educational models, frameworks, and policies from other educational contexts" (p. 504). In Okuda's case, her university in Japan decided to create a writing center that started as a center to work on writing in general, but ended up being mostly about writing in English. Okuda observes that "there seemed to be an insufficient consideration put into applying the Idea of a Writing Center as a collaborative space to attain product-oriented goals" (p. 516).

The "product" in Okuda's case, as in CAPA, is a polished text in English. The peril such a product carries for a Brazilian population is the implication that a text in Portuguese is not as good as one in English. In fact, the very idea that Brazilians should publish "internationally" can be read to mean that local knowledge can only be valued if validated by a foreign entity (Kaplan, 1993). It is in fact reminiscent of the origins of Brazilian higher education described in the introduction of this essay.

So doesn't a center like CAPA just exacerbate this dynamic?

An important distinction in Okuda's borrowed policy is that in the case of her university what came first was the idea of a writing center. It was known that such centers were common in American universities, so they wanted one too. The trouble started when they tried to make the idea of a writing center fit the local Japanese context, almost as an imposition, like bluegrass music recorded over classical *gagaku*. By contrast, in CAPA's case

the “writing center” concept actually came as an afterthought. My research had shown me that graduate students and faculty needed help not simply with their writing per se or even with their English, but with something bigger. They needed a space. Before CAPA, there was no space for talk about writing to occur. It’s funny the power a space can have. If you build a parking lot, cars will come. If you put grass there instead, kids will come with their parents and pets. We built a social space for writing where there was none, and the authors came. We built that space, and people wanted to know what to call it. So we called it a “writing center.”

Importantly, when the authors came, our tutors engaged them in conversation about not only what they wanted to say, but how they wanted to be understood. *In Portuguese*. They were more than tutors; they were allies.

In fact, one of the best pieces of evidence that the writing center growth in Brazil is a local phenomenon with its own emerging epistemology is the fact that some of those tutors have developed research praxis of their own. Their scholarship is not derivative of North American writing center research, but original knowledge rooted in Brazil. Since 2020, theses and dissertations such as those of Cons (2020), Rezende (2021), and Junaid (2022) are evincing the growing interest by Brazilians in Brazilian writing center practice. (Indeed, I know of at least one forthcoming edited volume—not edited by me—that will primarily feature research on Brazilian writing center practice.)

But perhaps the best evidence that CAPA is genuinely Brazilian is that the founder is no longer needed to run it. The music that plays there was arranged with Brazilian instruments and harmonies at its heart; now only Brazilian artists make up the band. For the people at Universidade Federal do Paraná, the sound is not seen as introduced, but seems instead familiar, as if it was always there. Kind of like bossa nova. CAPA is a different beat, but not one out of sync with local rhythms. The space we created is today as integrated into campus life as the library, theater, and *restaurante universitário* (dining hall).

Writing centers are growing in Brazil, but they are not imports. They are Brazilian innovations. Just as bossa nova resides in a Third Space blending Brazilian and American influences, Brazilian writing centers fuse external concepts with local needs and realities. This hybridity generates new understandings of writing center work tailored to the Brazilian context. Like bossa nova’s national origins, the singular vibe of these Brazilian centers deserves appreciation. They are Brazilian innovations, not foreign knockoffs.

CAPA’s priorities also strongly embody the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, who advocated for valuing local knowledge. In this way, CAPA carries forward Freire’s uniquely Brazilian educational philosophy. Though exiled, Freire became a Brazilian export whose ideas now influence global pedagogy. Similarly, the writing center model born at CAPA contributes local Brazilian understandings to international writing center conversations. The beat goes on.

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