

On Notions of (In)Visibility and Diaspora Space: The Case of *Batuku* as a Popular Cultural Practice in Lisbon

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Abstract

In social sciences, new patterns of migration and the related living realities have mostly been looked at from the perspective of 'integration' and, more recently, 'development'. Less attention has been paid to popular cultural practices, which this article considers to be crucial in the constitution of so-called 'diasporic spaces'. By exploring the practice of *Batuku* – presumably the oldest musical style on the Cape Verde islands – in the postcolonial setting of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML), I want to open up debates regarding assumed dichotomies such as 'visible' and 'invisible'. *Batuku* can be considered a 'community-related' practice and is generally practiced by (working class) women (the *Batukaderas*) at what is generally referred to as the 'periphery' of Lisbon; rendering it 'invisible' to many discussions of 'popular culture'. In this article, I will stress the need to apply an intersectional approach when analysing notions of (in)visibility and argue that *Batukaderas* experience a threefold exclusion or 'invisibility' (based on classed, racialised and gendered experiences). Moreover, this article aims at arguing that what is deemed 'invisible' is often either romanticised and/or silenced as an 'Other', and that *Batukaderas* challenge these romanticisations and silences through their practice.

Introduction

While it is sometimes claimed that the field of postcolonial studies (among others) has paid insufficient attention to popular culture as a productive site (Devadas/ Prentice 2011: 687), various theorists have thoroughly engaged with popular cultural practices in diaspora spaces and argue that they play an important role for the construction of diasporic identities (Hall 1990, 1998; Gilroy 1993; Appadurai 1998). Music and dance are commonly listed as key markers of 'cultural identities' (Ribeiro 2010), with music often being defined as one of the most important forms or artistic expressions of popular culture (Englert 2008: 1).

Batuku, which is said to be the oldest popular cultural practice on the Cape Verde islands, can be described as a combination of singing, drumming, and dancing. It initially developed on the island of *Santiago* and is predominantly practiced by (rural) women, the *Batukaderas*. During colonial times, *Batuku* was prohibited both by the Portuguese authorities and the Catholic Church (Lobban 1995; Fikes 1998; Sheringham/Cohen 2013). Yet *Batuku* continued to be practiced and is thus closely associated with the inhabitants of *Santiago* and their anti-colonial resistance (Sheringham/Cohen 2013; Tavares 2016).

Drawing on literature from Cultural and Postcolonial Studies as well as Feminist (Human) Geography, this article will examine the relation between notions of resistance and co-optation and ideas of (in)visibilities, respectively. Applying an intersectional reading (Brah 1996)¹ of empirical work carried out in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML)², I will analyse how the negotiation of *Batuku* as a 'Cape Verdean' popular cultural practice highlights both the continuation and challenge of complex power relations in a diasporic, postcolonial context.

I will start by briefly addressing the research framework and by offering some background information on the research context as well as on the practice of *Batuku*. This will be followed by an outline of my theoretical approach with respect to notions of resistance and co-optation and (in)visibilities, respectively, in more detail. These outlines are related to my argument that notions of (in)visibilities need to be considered when discussing forms of resistance and co-optation. I will then analyse how both

¹ Avtar Brah's approach to intersectionality will be explained in more detail on page 77ff.

² AML is short for *Área Metropolitana de Lisboa* and will be used as an abbreviation throughout this article.

resistance and co-optation are linked to what I refer to as ‘romanticisations’ and ‘silences’, and how different (in)visibilities play into this. Lastly, I will argue that *Batukaderas* resist their invisibilisation by (1) negotiating and reclaiming spaces and (2) contesting silences.

The analysis is primarily based on material collected in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML) over different periods in 2016 and 2017 through participatory observation at various events and 25 semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in Portuguese with *Batukaderas*³ (from several *Batuku* groups) as well as people associated with the practice as supporters or event organisers. All interviews have been anonymised for reasons of privacy and ethical confidentiality; this was discussed with the interviewees throughout the research. It should also be clarified that while writing this article, not all interviews have been analysed yet. Furthermore, I only analyse *Batuku* performances at festivals or larger, more ‘formal’ events and not those that took place in ‘community-related’⁴ contexts, as these events are better suited to demonstrate the intersections of negotiations around (in)visibilities.

Diaspora & Popular Culture: The Need for Intersectionality

In contrast to more essentialising notions of ‘diaspora’, Avtar Brah’s concept of ‘diaspora space’ emphasises a process-oriented perspective and focuses on the various negotiation processes of ‘boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and otherness, of “us” and “them”’ (Brah 1996: 205). According to her, processes of diasporisation not only include those who have migrated, but also those who are constructed as ‘natives’ (ibid). Following these remarks, I understand Portugal (or Lisbon, in this specific case) as a diaspora space, in which notions of ‘Cape Verdean’, ‘Brazilian’, ‘Ukrainian’ and other diasporas are in contact with each other as well as with a proclaimed, constructed essence of ‘Portugueseness’. ‘Diaspora’ is hence not an essentialising concept linked to an ‘original community’ but

³Ten interviews were conducted with *Batukaderas* and two with *Batukadoris* – a term that exists in Cape Verdean *Kriolu* to indicate a male presence but is hardly ever used. The female plural form *Batukaderas* is generally employed when referring to the members of a *Batuku* group, even if a small number of men might be present (Tavares 2016: 36, 77).

⁴The framing of *Batuku* as ‘community-related’ was inspired by and builds on Katharina Fritsch’s argument in her PhD thesis (2018), in which she analyses what she refers to as the ‘dispositive of communitarianisation’ in the context of Franco-Comorian diasporas in Marseille.

rather an ongoing negotiation process, mainly constituted by the intersecting of 'race', ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age or disability. We can thus see that the concept of intersectionality is crucial to Brah's framing of diaspora space; as this is the only way that negotiations around 'belonging' and 'Otherness' can be addressed along the 'multi-axial (...) notion of power' (Brah 1996: 239).

Definitions of 'popular culture' range from an equation with 'mass culture', 'youth culture', or 'urban culture' to an emphasis of its broad impact or its low entry barriers ('accessibility') as a crucial defining factor (Englert 2008; Storey 2009: 6-11; Devadas/ Prentice 2011: 689). None of these definitions, however, apply to the effective situatedness of *Batuku* in the AML. In accordance with the likes of Paul Gilroy (1993) or Stuart Hall (1998), I thus locate my reflections within discussions on postcolonial popular cultures. Hall insists that 'what is essential to the definition of popular culture is the relations which define "popular culture" in a continuing tension (relationship, influence, antagonism) to the dominant culture' (Hall 1998: 449) and understands diasporic cultural practices as challenging ideas of fixed meanings and identities.

In sum, notions of diaspora as well as popular culture are situated within specific contexts and negotiate specific power relations.

From Cape Verde to Lisbon

Since colonial times, Portugal – and Lisbon in particular – has been a central destination of migration from Cape Verde, an archipelago with nine inhabited islands. This former Portuguese colony, situated roughly 550km off the coast of West Africa, gained (political) independence in 1975 (Fikes 2008: 54). The Cape Verdean population, culture, and language evolved from the forced contact between African enslaved peoples and European, mostly Portuguese, colonisers.

Cape Verdean migration movements have differed in various aspects, such as destinations, conditions, or period of time. One of the first migrations from the islands occurred in the 1860s and was related to the US-American whaling industry (Carling et al. 2008: 20). When the abolition of slavery in Cape Verde was declared at the end of the 19th century, the Portuguese colonial power enforced the migration of Cape Verdeans – primarily men – to other Portuguese colonies in Africa, particularly to São Tomé, as indentured labourers (Carling et al. 2008). At the time of colonialism, Cape

Verdeans⁵ were utilised by the Portuguese in order to maintain their Empire as they were often employed as minor officials (intermediaries) in the administration of the different Portuguese colonies (Williams 1999: 111f).

Other examples of the enormous variety of migration experiences from Cape Verde include the migration of female domestic workers to Italy or of so-called 'low-skilled' workers to Portugal (Carling et al. 2008: 22). The latter increased in the 1960s, when the Portuguese Salazar regime granted labour permits (especially to Cape Verdeans) and after Portugal joined the EU in 1986. Since the late 2000s until the early 2010s, however, there has been a relative decrease as a result of the country's economic crisis and ensuing high unemployment (Arenas 2012: 170).

This article focuses on the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (AML), where – generally speaking – a high percentage of so-called 'Cape Verdean' populations⁶ can be considered as living in rather precarious conditions as well as under stigmatised circumstances. Neoliberal urbanisation projects, which mainly started in the early 1990s, represent a further incursion into the lives of mostly migrant communities as entire neighbourhoods were – and still are – torn down and their residents relocated to *bairros sociais* ('social' neighbourhoods, i.e. state sponsored project housing); forcing many of them to live in even more peripheral locations than before (Ascensão 2011; Pardue 2012).

Herstories⁷ of Batuku

Batuku, which is presumably the oldest popular cultural practice on Cape Verde, can be described as a combination of singing, drumming, and dancing, and initially developed on the island of *Santiago* (Tavares 2016), the largest of the nine inhabited islands. *Batukaderas*, the women who practice it, use scraps of cloth wrapped in plastic or pleather bags as drums (called *Txabetas*) and gather in a circle, semi-circle or crescent known as *Tereru* (or

⁵ Mostly men, again.

⁶ I have opted for using 'Cape Verdean' with quotation marks throughout this article when referring to discourses in the context of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

⁷ I am using this neologism to highlight the role of women* concerning this matter. The feminist critique of conventional historiography and women's 'invisibilisation' in this regard is nothing new and gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Mills 1989; Price 1988). This neologism, however, is not unproblematic and undisputed because it does not challenge the dominant, heteronormative assumption regarding the two distinct, complementary genders 'female' and 'male'.

terreiro ⁸) (Sheringham/ Cohen 2013: 12). The topics treated in the songs range from accounts of ‘everyday’ interactions to poverty, gender issues, politics, or the environment.

During Portuguese colonisation, *Batuku* was prohibited as the Catholic Church argued that it was ‘sexually suggestive’ (Fikes 1998: 12) while Portuguese authorities – particularly during the authoritarian years of the *Estado Novo* (1933-74) – considered it too ‘African’, too ‘primitive’ and too ‘subversive’ (Lobban 1995: 75; Sheringham/ Cohen 2013: 12f). In spite of this history of marginalisation and suppression, *Batuku* continued to be practiced. Allegedly, for instance, *Batukaderas* decided to utilise cloth stuffed in bags as percussion instruments (tucked between their knees) because Portuguese authorities banned the use of drums. Consequently, the prohibition did not lead to an outright suppression as practitioners creatively adapted their activities to the circumstances and thus demonstrated an act of (unarmed) resistance (Sheringham/ Cohen 2013: 13; Tavares 2016: 48). It was only after independence in 1975 that *Batuku* slowly started to be recognised as a cultural property on Cape Verde (Nogueira 2011).

Batuku presumably started spreading in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML) in the 1960s and 1970s (given the mentioned increase in the presence of Cape Verdean migrants) and can be considered a ‘community-related’ practice there: *Batukaderas* generally perform for themselves or in ‘community-contexts’ (weddings, baptisms, birthdays, religious holidays) and for broader audiences (at events or festivals to celebrate Lisbon’s ‘diversity’ and the ‘Lusophone world’ ⁹, for instance) upon receiving an invitation. During the time of my research stay, there were approximately 13 ‘officialised’ (in the sense of having a group name) *Batuku* groups in the AML¹⁰, based in different (‘peripheral’) neighbourhoods and municipalities

⁸This would be Portuguese but I have opted for writing in Cape Verdean Creole (*Kriolu*) when referring to Cape Verdean words and for using the ALUPEC (the ‘official’ Cape Verdean alphabet) throughout this article.

⁹ The concept of the ‘Lusophone world’ is meant to include all the countries with Portuguese as their official language. However, many ‘criticise the concept of “lusophone music” promoted inside Portugal, seeing it as a neocolonialist ideological category used by the Portuguese to appropriate Cape Verdean music (...) as their own cultural product’ (Sieber 2005: 143).

¹⁰I want to indicate here that the number of ‘official’ *Batuku* groups in the AML is quite volatile. At the time of writing this article, for instance, I am aware that some of the

(*Cacém, Outurela, Cova da Moura, Casal da Boba, Costa de Caparica, Vialonga* etc.). Some of them have existed for more than 20 years while others were just founded recently; the group sizes range from approximately five to up to 20 members. The groups in Lisbon sing about a variety of topics – from their families or memories of Cape Verde to experiences of racism in Portugal, issues of legalisation, precarious working conditions, demolitions or solidarity with other migrant populations.

Most of the *Batukaderas* came to the Metropolitan Area in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of them can be considered working-class and are employed as domestic workers or as cleaners in private janitorial companies that have contracts with universities, car parks, banks, or large office buildings (Fikes 1998; 2005; 2008). The majority of them depend on public transport to move around the Metropolitan Area. They are not immobile but their mobility is often based on fixed work contracts that confine them to a specific employer and perhaps residence that is far away from where they live. Because of the very early (or very late, depending on perspective) working hours and the time needed for public transport (which can take up to 90 minutes or more), their mobility can thus be considered an ‘invisible’ one – based on classed, gendered as well as racialised experiences – to the larger society, as they often have to leave the house in the middle of the night to go to work. The effects of marginalised living situations are thus compounded by the gendered, racialised and classed work regimes that manage migrant life.¹¹ Due to the previously mentioned relocations, many *Batukaderas* now live further apart and thus meet less regularly as transportation on weekends (which is the only time they could meet to practice *Batuku*) is both more difficult and expensive (many buses and trains run on a reduced schedule and tickets may not be included in their monthly transport pass, for instance) than during the week. Many do not earn any money for organised performances and thus depend on at least having their transportation paid for – although this is not always the case either and many pay their own transport in order to perform at events.

groups I met or talked to during my research stay no longer exist or are in the process of disbandment, while others have been established.

¹¹ Working-class ‘Cape Verdean’ men, on the other hand, generally work in construction and carpentry jobs. ‘They too were isolated within their work sites but it seemed that there were more opportunities for establishing social connections across diverse social lines because of the social character of construction work, such as shared lunch and break periods’ (Fikes 2008: 54f).

Notions of Resistance and Co-optation

Generally speaking, it is important to note that expressions of popular culture can, on the one hand, be manifestations of (direct or indirect) resistance to contexts of oppression or counter-hegemonic forces but, on the other hand, be easily co-opted by dominant political or social elites (Englert 2008: 7f). Sheringham/ Cohen (2013: 25) consider resistance to be 'from below' and co-optation 'from above' or 'top-down'. While I generally agree with this approach, I also deem it important to be wary of creating a rigid dichotomy between the two. Just like there are many forms of resistance, there can also be many forms of co-optation and it can potentially be difficult to determine whether particular strategies represent a form of resistance and/or co-optation.

Accordingly, it is necessary to emphasise that this is not an either-or question. There is no clear line as strategies or events can include both moments of resistance and co-optation at the same time, which will be shown in this article. 'We argue that the appropriation of a popular cultural practice from above does not end resistance from below; rather, both processes can take place sequentially or synchronously' (Sheringham/Cohen 2013: 10). When discussing these notions, researchers should hence be mindful what they ascribe to whom. Not all events for large audiences are automatically co-optations of popular cultures on the part of the organisers. And not all groups, who take part in 'multicultural' or 'diversity' events are solely being co-opted – it is crucial to not deny people's individual agencies and to avoid victimisations in this regard: 'Many musicians (...) may "choose" to be "co-opted". They not only make the most of the situation, by participating they seek to influence the shape of officially and commercially sanctioned popular culture (ibid: 25).

Since resistance is a central aspect in the analysis of power relations, I want to elaborate, citing Brah (1996), that '(...) power is not always already constituted but is produced, and reiterated or challenged, through its exercise in multiple sites. (...) Power is the very means for challenging, contesting and dismantling the structures of injustice' (ibid: 239). This can manifest itself in different ways, from more 'low-level, informal (...) ways such as sabotage, irony, humour and cynicism (...)' (Swan/Fox 2010: 575), 'from workplace struggles, through campaigning against specific state policies and, importantly, through culture: music, art, literary production, cinematic practices, fashion' (Brah 1996: 173).

While I do agree that the automatic equation of ‘popular culture’ with ‘resistance’ can be problematic (Englert 2008: 8) and for instance lead to romanticising interpretations (Swan/ Fox 2010: 576), I want to argue that it is also important not to ignore existing political negotiations simply because of this questionable tendency. In the case of *Batuku* on Cape Verde and in Lisbon, for instance, the idea of resistance is ever-present and thus cannot be evaded: Due to the mentioned prohibition and repression in colonial times, *Batuku* is historically a practice of resistance on Cape Verde and is still framed as a legacy of this in the postcolonial, diasporic context of Lisbon.

Notions of (In)visibility

Cultural practices that predominantly take place in ‘informal’ settings at what is considered the ‘periphery’ and with a strong presence of women* are often regarded as ‘invisible’. When discussing notions of resistance and co-optation, I therefore want to argue that this needs to be done whilst taking discourses and negotiations around (in)visibilities into account.

In relation to notions of invisibility and visibility, I draw on theoretical work around ‘space’ from an intersectional, postcolonial, feminist perspective. Based on Nirmal Puwar’s (2004), Katherine McKittrick’s (2006) and Claire Alexander’s (2011) work, I understand ‘space’ not in homogeneous, definite and fixed terms but as being internally heterogeneous, porous and processual, and constantly (re)made through ‘everyday encounters and practices of people’ (Alexander 2011: 207) as well as through power relations: ‘Geography is not (...) secure and unwavering: we produce space, we produce its meanings, and we work very hard to make geography what it is. (...) while we all produce, know, and negotiate space – albeit on different terms – geographies in the diaspora are accentuated by racist paradigms of the past and their ongoing hierarchical patterns’ (McKittrick 2006: xi, xii).¹²

Referring to the work of AbdouMaliq Simone, Eduardo Ascensão (2011) points to the various manifestations as well as advantages and disadvantages of visibility and invisibility, respectively. His research in a neighbourhood in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, which was later demolished, shows the various shifts habitants¹³ experienced and – at times

¹² Here, again, is a reminder for intersectionality.

¹³ At the time of his research, the majority in this neighbourhood was made up of Black

– consciously undertook between (in)visibilities: A certain invisibility allowed them to settle and construct houses there in the first place, while some sort of visibility was later desired or needed in order to acquire documents to work or to apply for citizenship (ibid: 63). Therefore, while an initial ‘visual’ invisibility was crucial, it became problematic once this turned into an administrative and political invisibility. This political and social invisibility on the one hand was also accompanied by an intense (negative and stigmatising) visibility of certain populations in the media (ibid: 155).

It is thus fundamental to emphasise that both invisibility and visibility are interrelated, can have different effects and need to be understood as concepts rather than one-dimensional facts. We must also keep in mind that evaluations of invisible or visible – as well as their consequences – are related to intersectionality. While it might be tempting to associate visibility with positive or empowering effects and characteristics, it is important to be cautious of essentialisms in this regard. As Thembi Mutch (2017), for example, argues ‘concepts of public visibility equating to power are not necessary [sic] transferable’ (ibid: 221). In her analysis of Zanzibari girls’ and women’s use of digital media, she shows that we need to be aware of different ideas of ‘freedom’ as well as different forms of agency (ibid: 224). According to her, there are notions of agency that do not require ‘public’ visibility for their existence (ibid: 237) and I would go even further and argue that there are some practices that need a certain invisibility in order to (be able to) resist. Yet, as I will demonstrate in the main parts of this article, some forms of resistance – *Batuku*, in this case – are indeed related to negotiations of one’s own visibilities.

Visibility through Co-optation

As I have shown regarding notions of (in)visibilities, there can be different manifestations, effects, and ascriptions and these are all linked to questions of intersectionality. Furthermore, it is not about an either-or but, rather, about a how or why. In the context of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML), migrant populations can experience different forms of invisibility – in terms of citizenship laws, labour conditions (or lack thereof), or a scarce access to rights and benefits. According to some scholars (Almeida 2006), however,

there is one area of 'positive' visibility; namely that of cultural production: 'anything that goes from mass media consumer products like Brazilian telenovelas to apparent expressions of rebellion like Hip Hop, and everything in/between: Lusophone African literature, Cape Verdean music' (ibid: 27). Yet, as was shown regarding theoretical debates around visibility and will be argued further hereafter, not all forms of visibility can be automatically and exclusively considered 'positive' for all involved. In the case of *Batuku* (and most likely other popular cultural practices too), this visibility can also hold a certain potential for romanticisation and exoticisation.

(Self)image of Lisbon

In the competition with other cities concerning a visible place in the market of global culture, Lisbon has promoted and framed itself as the centre for a unique musical 'mixture' (*mistura*) within the 'Portuguese-speaking world' (De La Barre/ Vanspauwen 2013: 119). As previously mentioned, *Batuku* at times takes place at events or festivals that celebrate 'diversity', 'multiculturalism' or *Lusofonia*¹⁴. As De La Barre (2010) puts it, Lisbon's ever-present self-image and self-definition as an 'inclusive' and 'multicultural' city reveals itself in the desire to connect (or re-connect) with the 'Lusophone world': 'Besides companies reinventing themselves through the practice of cultural promotion, the city also reinvents itself through the promotion, the inclusion of the Other: it is (...) an increasingly assertive attempt to include diversity as a source of cultural richness. In this process, *Lusofonia* eventually becomes an instrument for the promotion of Lisbon as an open, multicultural city' (ibid: 145, original emphasis). This can thus be interpreted as a need for Lisbon (similar to other capitals) to make itself 'visible' to the 'outside world'. This process aims to project the idea of a post-national society open to circulation, where tolerance is the keyword (ibid: 150). The need to promote and (visibly!) 'valorise' the Other is part of this; yet 'by promoting the Other, [we] are also promoting ourselves' (ibid: 151). This is not to say that these events or festivals are all inherently and exclusively problematic as they can include many moments of resistance by different actors, some of which will be addressed subsequently, but rather to highlight the ambivalences and ambiguities surrounding them.

¹⁴ A concept that suggests cultural homogeneity and harmony among the so-called 'Portuguese-speaking world'.

The striving for 'openness' and 'diversity' takes shape in the desire to promote 'authenticity', which is in turn related to musical expressions, for example, that do not (yet) have 'visibility' on a larger scale (De La Barre 2010: 151). In this quest, new forms and styles (musical and other) may gain such 'visibility' – even more so when they are perceived as 'peripheral', 'marginal' (and thus as generally 'invisible'). This becomes evident when looking at some event titles (and thus the ways in which Lisbon represents itself): *Lisboa Invisível* ('Invisible Lisbon'), *Outras Lisboas* ('Other Lisbons'), *Lisboa Mistura* ('Mixed Lisbon') or *Festa da Diversidade* ('Diversity Festival'). In this regard, I want to again stress that my referring to events or festivals that celebrate 'diversity', 'multiculturalism' or *Lusofonia* and mentioning of specific event titles should not be read as an all-encompassing criticism. I was not present at most of them and thus cannot make general comments on their content, on the motivation or objectives of the sponsors or organisers, or on the way performances were staged. And I know from conversations with friends and acquaintances in Lisbon that many of these events were and are critical interventions and/or collaborations. What I want to argue, however, is that we should differentiate between *intention* and *reception* or *effect*. Furthermore, and as will be illustrated in more detail, I argue that co-optation and resistance(s) often occur at the same time (by various actors) and that the idea of an 'invisible Lisbon' can include a certain romanticism (and a danger of exoticisation and fetishisation); an emphasis on a 'different', stylised Other, who is both 'authentic' and 'exotic'. This 'invisible Lisbon' can be read as the condemned, yet desired, counterpart of a 'visible Lisbon' (De La Barre 2010: 148-153), 'consumed' in a 'safe' encounter (Comaroff/ Comaroff 2009: 148). In some instances, such obsessions with 'authentic' art forms may lead to (re)discoveries of 'ethnicity' as a commodity with an economic value (Nyamnjoh 2013: 654), which can also be described as an 'identity economy' or 'ethno-preneurialism' (Comaroff/ Comaroff 2009: 151).

Furthermore, the mere visibility of people can potentially be used in tokenistic ways and turned into cultural capital for sponsors and event organisers – 'look, we have many cultures and marginalised groups present here' (Swan/Fox 2010: 580) – without these sponsors or organisers actually challenging political systems or power relations (ibid). What is deemed 'invisible' is thus not only romanticised but silenced at the same time: The perceived Other is silenced in so many ways (and thus made invisible, or

‘invisibilised’) – politically, economically, socially – but its music, rhythms, dances, instruments etcetera are persistently (re-)constructed as ‘so authentic’, ‘so organic’ (De La Barre 2010: 148, 153).

I want to argue that in many of the events around ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘diversity’ – but also in ‘mainstream’ public (media) discourses – these romanticisations and silences go hand in hand: A romanticisation and celebration of *Lusofonia*, on the one hand, and no mention of imperialism, colonialism and slavery on the other. An emphasis on the ‘richness’ of the ‘lusophone’ gastronomy and crafts, on the one hand, and a blind eye to ongoing demolitions and evictions on the other. A pride in the ‘shared language’ without mentioning linguistic discrimination or prohibitions. Pointing out Portugal’s high score on the MIPEx¹⁵ as proof of the country’s ‘tolerance’ while at the same time remaining silent about exploitation of labour, racism¹⁶ and police brutality.¹⁷ As I will argue in the next chapter, *Batuku* can be seen as a form of resistance against and as an intervention in some of these silences.¹⁸

The silencing of historical aspects and the romanticisation of *Lusofonia* becomes apparent from the following note I took after attending a festival in the municipality of *Oeiras*. This festival, which included a performance by a

¹⁵ According to the *Migrant Integration Policy Index* (MIPEx), created by the *Barcelona Centre for International Affairs* (CIDOB) and the *Migration Policy Group* (MPG), Portugal ranks second (out of 38 countries) when it comes to the ‘integration of migrants’ (<http://www.mipex.eu/portugal>, accessed: 15.09.2017).

¹⁶ A recent article, for instance, discusses how Portugal is one of the countries in Europe where racism is manifested the most. A cited survey shows that 52.9 % of the population believe that ‘biological races’ exist in the sense of ‘races or ethnic groups who are born less intelligent and/or less hardworking’ (<https://www.publico.pt/2017/09/02/sociedade/noticia/portugal-e-dos-paises-da-europa-que-mais-manifesta-racismo-1783934>, accessed: 15.09.2017).

¹⁷ For more information and media coverage about these issues, see:

<http://racismoambiental.net.br/2016/06/19/racismo-em-portugues-o-lado-esquecido-do-colonialismo/>, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-portugal-police-racism/whole-portuguese-police-station-charged-with-racially-motivated-crimes-idUSKBN19W22D>, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/portuguese-denied-citizenship-country-170302084810644.html>,

<http://elmmagazine.eu/articles/black-students-in-portugal-struggle-with-institutional-racism/>, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-32419952> [all accessed: 15.09.2017].

¹⁸ This reading should not be misinterpreted as a general argument that all (!) *Batuku* groups or *Batukaderas* are ‘consciously’ using large events or festivals as moments of resistance as some simply like to perform (or have other motivations) and do not say much onstage.

Batuku group in the early evening of one of the festival days, was meant to celebrate *Lusofonia* and to valorise the Portuguese language.

'As I enter the park, it quickly becomes apparent that the audience is mainly *white*, fairly young, many families with children. It doesn't seem like a touristy audience but mostly "local". There is no entrance fee for the festival ... Some of the booths could be considered to sell "Cape Verdean" food or goods. (...) There are also banners along the main avenue (...) that give information on Portugal and all of the former colonies (including the typical cuisine). I take photos of the banners with my phone. The banner on Mozambique, for example, talks about its "discovery" and "conquest" and mentions the national textile. The banner on Cape Verde also talks about its "discovery" and how it was the first "city" that the Portuguese "had" in Africa, as part of the "adventure of discoveries". It also mentions that almost one million Cape Verdeans live outside of their country and many of them in Portugal. The banner on Angola refers to the country's richness in diamonds, petroleum and iron ore' (Observation Prot. 10/09/2016).

As becomes obvious from this excerpt, a celebration of 'diversity' and *Lusofonia* relies on reconstructions of glorifying narratives concerning Portugal's colonial past; focussing on items such as food or arts and crafts as well as (re)framing – and thus romanticising – the country's colonial history with ('neutral') terms such as 'discovery', 'conquest' or 'adventures'. This romanticising idea of *Lusofonia* can also be seen from the following excerpts from an interview with one of the principal organisers of the mentioned event.

'But on Saturday the challenge ... was for it not to be a concert of music, it was to be an encounter, of musicians, which passes through this axis Brazil, Portugal and Africa. So it was a concert designed for seven musicians. A Guinean, Brazilian, Portuguese, Cape Verdean, Mozambican. There were various ethnicities there. And they played together ... The same language but with different accents (...) ... it was a mixture that I wanted, it was this,

to show [that] we speak the same language but everyone has their own characteristic. Linguistics and culture' (Int. event organiser 06/12/2016).¹⁹

'Now, now I remember, the keyword itself, of [the festival], from the beginning (pause) for me, was "celebration". (...) It was, the celebration of the Portuguese language. It was, the fact of celebrating' (ibid).

This is not to say that event organisers are unaware of the emergence of *Batuku*, for instance, and are wilfully ignoring it and co-opting the practice for their own benefit. In fact, many of the organisers I interviewed were conscious of past prohibitions and the current discrimination and marginalisation of Black²⁰ residents in the Portuguese context. And many planned the events and *Batuku* performances with this in mind, and designed them as collaborations and opportunities of intervention; which could thus also be seen as some form of resistance. Yet, and this is my argument, all of this is not internally inconsistent with the romanticism/silence aspect mentioned above. The following excerpt from an interview with one of the organisers of the previously mentioned festival further highlights these ambivalences.

'From the beginning ... we knew that the *Batukaderas* ... from Cape Verde would have to mark their presence there. Through this side that is not musical, does not only come from its musical part, it comes from the entire piece, isn't it, from this history and ... this very strong tradition. Because it is a lament from Cape Verdean women, it is a war cry (...) a way of expressing. So we wanted the *Batukaderas* to be there, with other African manifestations ... What we wanted to do, and which wasn't done ... due to lack of time. (...) We wanted ... to set up a conversation one hour before the presentation of the *Batukaderas*, a public workshop with [them] (...) and that there would be an introduction, an initiation, for the

¹⁹ All quotes were translated from Portuguese to English by the author.

²⁰ Throughout this article, I understand 'whiteness' and 'blackness' as analytical categories and am hence italicising 'whiteness' in order to clarify its constructive character and capitalising 'blackness' in order to emphasise its political notions (Eggers et al. 2005: 13).

audience, what is the origin of this tradition. How did it emerge ... And afterwards say “Now yes, let’s see the presentation of the *Batukaderas*. Let’s see what is the result of this” ... An initiation so that the audience understands “Okay, they are not merely women drumming and shaking their hips” ... So and I think that the more the Portuguese, who doesn’t have this proximity ... will understand how it originated. And will identify him_herself more ...’ (Int. event organiser 06/12/2016).

It becomes clear from this quote that the event organiser is familiar with the broader meaning of *Batuku* and that he is fully aware of the danger of exoticisation and fetishisation (by referring to the intended ‘realisation’ by the audience that the *Batukaderas* are ‘not merely women drumming and shaking their hips’). It also shows that he had initially planned the performance of the group as part of a broader informative and educating narrative in the sense of ‘promoting inter-cultural understanding’ (‘the Portuguese ... will identify (...) more’). The *Batuku* performance at this event was thus conceptualised as an opportunity of intervention by the organiser himself, which shows that the ascriptions of who co-opts and who resists are not always clear-cut, as the intended (but not implemented) staging in this case included (at least theoretically) a challenge to dominant ascriptions by the organisers. Specific moments of resistance and intervention undertaken by the practice of *Batuku* or the *Batukaderas*, more specifically, will be addressed in the following part of this article.

Resisting Invisibilisation

As I have shown so far throughout this paper, visibility is a complex concept and is not necessarily always affirmative or ‘empowering’. Having said this, I will argue below that the *Batukaderas* resist their invisibilisation in a number of ways; and by claiming visibility turn it into a conscious ‘form of *engagement* with broader social processes and societal structures’ (Alexander 2011: 204, original emphasis). I will argue that they do this by (1) negotiating and reclaiming spaces and (2) contesting the aforementioned silences.

While it should be pointed out that female ‘Cape Verdean’ performers and musicians from diasporic contexts are more and more present and ‘visible’ in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (and on international stages) – such as

Lura, Sara Tavares, Mayra Andrade, Cesária Évora²¹, or Nancy Vieira – these are usually artists ascribed to ‘traditional’ musical styles such as *Morna* or *Koladera*²² or to the *World Music* genre (Cidra 2011: 304), and not to *Batuku*.

As mentioned, *Batuku* can be considered a ‘community-related’ practice and is predominantly practiced in ‘informal’ settings at what is generally referred to as the ‘periphery/ies’ of Lisbon; rendering it ‘invisible’ to many discussions of ‘diaspora’ or ‘popular culture’ (Fikes 2008). In interviews, some *Batukaderas* equated ‘visibility’ with performing ‘outside’ of ‘community contexts’:

‘(...) the rest, we perform, it is among us, in the community, well, which sometimes (...) does not stand out a lot / catch people’s eye, you know. (...) No. In some places like this it does not attract attention, isn’t it’ (Int. *Batukadera* 26/02/2017).

In this respect, gendered configurations of labour also play a role: because *Batukaderas* tend to work long hours, they are largely excluded from participation in (visible) projects that are conventionally described as diasporic (Fikes 2008: 50f). I thus want to, again, stress the need to apply an intersectional approach when discussing and analysing these notions: Based on the analysis by the anthropologist Max Ruben Tavares de Pina Ramos, I argue that *Batukaderas* – and thus the practice of *Batuku* – in Lisbon display a threefold exclusion or ‘invisibility’ (based on classed as well as gendered and racialised/ ethnicised experiences).²³

²¹ Cesária Évora is generally referred to as the ‘Queen of Morna’. She passed away in 2011.

²² Both of them are music genres that are more popular on the so-called *Barlavento* (‘Windward’) islands, which do not include the island of *Santiago* (where *Batuku* is from). *Morna* is often compared to the Portuguese *Fado*.

²³ This argument is based on a talk given by Max Ruben Tavares de Pina Ramos in a small activist space in *Cova da Moura* in March 2016. In this presentation, he addressed his rough analysis of *Batuku* on Cape Verde as experiencing a ‘double exclusion’ (based on racism and sexism). I have subsequently applied this approach to the diasporic, postcolonial context of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and expanded it to include classed experiences.

(Re)claiming Spaces

Neighbourhoods with a high percentage of Black populations – particularly those with a large presence of ‘Cape Verdean communities’, such as *Cova da Moura*, *6 de Maio*, *Portela* or *Casal da Boba* – are generally described by images around ‘poverty’ and ‘threat’ and thus criminalised and stigmatised in public discourse. Such framings employ and reproduce equations of ethnicised communities (the Other) with ‘ghettos’ and ‘slums’ (Ribeiro 2012: 75): ‘ethnically marked, anachronistic, bounded spaces inseparable from ideas of cultural difference and social decay’ (Alexander 2011: 203f). Or, as Luís Batalha puts it, ‘it is these immigrants that the white mainstream society has in mind when it comes to the social image of the “Cape Verdean community”. In the eyes of the white mainstream they are “Cape Verdean”, “black”, or “African”, but never “Portuguese”’ (Batalha 2004: 131). This shows that being coded as ‘problematic’ constructs visibility through disapproval (Alexander 2011: 206; Knowles 2013: 660).

As will be analysed below, contestations and renegotiations of positions, spaces and the meanings ascribed to them are not only possible but also crucial to postcolonial, intersectional contexts (Jackson 2011: 57, 66). In this regard, spaces matter because they are part of broader power relations and systems of representation; and the idea of resistance is a central aspect thereof. In this section of the paper, I conceptualise *Batuku* as resisting invisibilisation by (re)claiming spaces and hence renegotiating spatialised power relations. In the course of large festivals or events, I thus read *Batuku* performances as spaces of resistance.²⁴ By (re)claiming spaces, *Batukaderas* also create ‘counter-narratives’, with which they challenge dominant forms of representation (Alexander 2011: 206) as well as spatial allocations.

Over the past twenty plus years, different *Batuku* groups have performed in places such as the *Gulbenkian Foundation*, the *Cultural Centre of Belém*, the *National Museum of Ethnology*, the *São Luiz Theatre*, the *Expo ‘98*, *São Jorge Castle*, the *Jerónimos Monastery*, or the *Commerce Square* (the main square by the *Tejo* river); all of which are located in areas commonly referred to as touristic, economic or cultural ‘centres’ of Lisbon. None of these spaces are neutral but riddled with meanings and attributions, and in all of them *Batukaderas* are ‘out of place’ (Puwar 2004) based on their racialised, classed and gendered positionalities. They are ‘space invaders’ because their

²⁴ For a more in-depth analysis on *spaces* and *diasporisation*, see Fritsch (2018).

presence makes clear ‘what has been able to pass as the invisible’²⁵, unmarked and undeclared somatic norm’ (ibid: 8).

As mentioned, *Batuku* is generally framed as a practice of the ‘periphery/ies’. The *Batukaderas*’ ‘invasion’ of spaces that are considered the ‘centre’ therefore also points to another form of negotiation. In this regard, I want to argue that spatial power relations such as ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ should be discussed while keeping in mind that one person’s periphery can be another person’s centre (and vice versa).²⁶ What is often referred to as the ‘centre’ of Lisbon is, to put it more correctly, rather the touristic or the business centre and does not represent the centre in many people’s lives. Also, when we speak of diasporic activities or ‘Cape Verdean’ cultural practices, specifically *Batuku*, the ‘centre’ shifts and can be localised mostly (or exclusively) in the municipalities outside of Lisbon. Accordingly, I further understand *Batuku* as opposing established ideas of what and where cultural centres are.^{27 28}

²⁵ (In)visibilities regarding ‘race’ work in different ways and depend on how people are positioned in dominant discourses and power relations. As many scholars (Dyer 1997; Candelario 2000; Puwar 2004; Tate 2005, 2009) have argued, *whiteness* maintains its power via its invisibility; although this can depend on the standpoint of dominance (Byrne 2000: 5). The naturalised invisibility and racial neutrality of *whiteness* (Candelario 2000) ensures its persistent position of privilege and power. Being ‘unmarked’ is connected to being ‘unchallenged’ and, as a consequence thereof, *white* people are ‘visible’ as individuals (ibid: 6).

²⁶ There are various literary and scholarly descriptions of what constitutes a ‘centre’ and a ‘periphery’ but it is generally understood that they negotiate questions of power (Beetz 2008: 9f). In terms of negotiations of ‘culture’, it was argued for a long time that the ‘centre’ is representative of ‘cultural progress’ and the ‘periphery’ of ‘backwardness’, which is why the latter should learn from the achievements of the former (Hannerz 1989: 201-206). Many theories, including the Wallersteinian *world system theory*, tended to be predominantly focused on the ‘centre’ and – as Sherry Ortner (1984) argues – this lead to the tendency of depicting ‘history as something that arrives in the societies of the periphery (...) from the outside. We get the history of the impact of the center [sic] on the periphery, rather than the history of the periphery itself’ (Hannerz 1989: 207). My arguments above follow her theorisation.

²⁷ This framing was, again, inspired by and builds on Katharina Fritsch’s argument in her PhD thesis (2018), where she emphasises a reading of the music genre *Twarab* in Marseille as a community-related cultural market and as resisting dominant perceptions of cultural centres. She further analyses the role of *Twarab* as cultural work and not merely as a ‘community contribution’ (ibid). As part of this framing, she worked on a feature documentary film (together with the film maker Andrés Carvajal and the artist Mounir Hamada Hamza) entitled *Histoires de Twarab à Marseille* (‘Twarab Stories from Marseilles’),

Contesting silences

In *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place* (2004), Puwar criticises the growing diversity discourse, which is mostly used to mean a mere numeric inclusion of 'different bodies' (ibid: 1). She argues that the tendency to equate this inclusion with an actual 'social change' is problematic because it assumes that 'women [or ethnicised communities; A/N] are a homogeneous grouping that can generate a mimetic politics from their shared experiences' (ibid: 149). Including more or less 'different' people statistically does not inherently challenge or explore how power relations and systems of oppression work on an institutional level (ibid: 9f). This critique is crucial and was hinted at in my analysis of co-optations by pointing out the potential tokenistic visibility of people without challenges to political systems. Conceptualising *Batuku* as resistance, however, I want to argue that *Batukaderas* are not only 'out of place'. We can also read their disruption of spaces as a public (re)appropriation of their disavowal in the national public sphere and a contestation of and intervention in the previously mentioned silences that are present not only at many big festivals and events but also in 'mainstream' public discourse.

As pointed out, many events celebrating 'multiculturalism', 'diversity', or *Lusofonia* include numerous romanticising moments in terms of Lisbon's or Portugal's history or current 'tolerant' position, while excluding traces of slavery, colonialism, and their racist legacies still present and palpable for many people in Portuguese society today. Many *Batuku* groups use these spaces and events to highlight their struggles, on the one hand, but also to create 'counter-narratives' that oppose stereotypical and stigmatising representations or victimising and commiserating debates. They do this, for instance, by choosing songs that talk about police brutality, forced

which further pursues the question of Twarab as 'cultural work' by tracing the history and the development of this music genre from its so-called 'origins' on the Comoros to Marseilles, from the perspectives and musical trajectories of the artists themselves (<https://www.facebook.com/histoirestwarab/>).

²⁸ Many Black activist groups in the AML organise cultural events in neighbourhoods at the 'periphery/ies' and frame this as cultural resistance. The event *Cultura na Boba* ('Culture in Boba'), for instance, which took place in the neighbourhood of *Casal da Boba* (Amadora) in December 2017, included performances of *Rap Kriolu* as well as by two *Batuku* groups, poetry slams, and a play by the theatre group *Peles Negras Máscaras Negras* ('Black Skins Black Masks'), which addressed the conditions of Black, female domestic workers.

relocations, or the strains of their working conditions.²⁹ Furthermore, they sometimes have an introduction by somebody associated to their group, who emphasises the emergence of *Batuku*; thus making the history of colonialism and oppression visible.

‘She introduces the women. She says that they are women with strength ... who play a tradition, a cultural expression, which was forbidden until the 25th of April³⁰ because it was considered quite erotic, critical, and rather African. It transfers values from one generation to another. (...) The women would like to show their art. She says that these are women who work, they clean in hotels, hospitals, shops etc. Some of the group members could not be here today because they also have to work on Saturdays and Sundays. She finishes the introduction by explaining that they are from *Cova da Moura* and that they have a lot of pride in their neighbourhood, because there is a lot of *djunta-mon*³¹ there’ (Observation Prot. 10/09/2016).

‘We are from the neighbourhood *Cova da Moura*. *Batuku* is one of the most representative genres of the musical patrimony of Cape Verde. We are from the island of *Santiago*. *Batuku* was oppressed but survived thanks to the resistance and constant transition (...) from generation to generation’ (Recording *Batukadera*, 11/06/2017).

These excerpts from a note as well as a recording taken during *Batuku* performances not only exemplify the groups’ challenging of *Lusofonia* but also their emphasis on past ‘politics of invisibility’ (in the sense of *Batuku*’s oppression and prohibition) that were connected to *Batuku*’s ‘Africanness’ and ‘eroticism’. Furthermore, the first example highlights the *Batukaderas*’ multi-dimensional invisibilities (Knowles 2013: 659) by also addressing their classed positionality. Additionally, there is a conscious reference to the

²⁹ All songs are sung in *Kriolu* but many performances include short breaks between the songs, where the respective content is described to the audience.

³⁰ She was referring to April 25th 1974, the day that marks the *Carnation Revolution* in Portugal, which overthrew the authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo*.

³¹ This practice on Cape Verde can be translated to *juntar as mãos* in Portuguese, which literally means ‘to join hands’ but can be translated as ‘working together’ or even ‘sticking together’.

neighbourhood *Cova da Moura* in both excerpts and hence a (self)appreciation for spaces, which are extremely stigmatised in public discourse. I argue that all of these utterances create a 'counter-narrative' to dominant discourses of 'criminality, 'insecurity', 'unemployment' or 'laziness'.

'Between the songs, one *Batukadera* takes the microphone to welcome the audience and to explain the lyrics. She says that she assumes that most people in the audience don't speak *Kriolu*. (...) She explains that the first song was about work, the second about themselves as competent women (...) [another] song was about "their flag"³², meaning both the Cape Verdean and the Portuguese one' (Observation Prot. 10/09/2016).

I read this excerpt as not only illustrating the aforementioned explanation of the lyrics in between the songs but also as a self-confident reclaiming of the diaspora space Lisbon and of a diasporic positionality, respectively, by the *Batukaderas*. I thus want to conclusively argue that in making their stories 'known as part of the city, becoming part of knowledge about the city' (Knowles 2013: 656), they claim visibility in order to question power relations and to call attention to 'different' narratives. As one *Batukadera* phrased it in an interview, 'they have to know what my life is' (Int. *Batukadera* 30/10/2016). This 'counter-narrative' then contests the invisibility of not being 'presented in any complex way, appearing only as stereotypes or ideal types (...)' (Alexander 2002: 564).

Conclusion

As I have shown in this article, notions of (in)visibilities are complex, processual, and multi-layered phenomena that are always interrelated and can shift depending on the context and the positionalities of the people in question. Debates around resistance and co-optation follow similar patterns. I have tried to stress the fact that there can be resistance within co-optation, and that researchers need to be cautious in order to not fall into the trap of automatically ascribing resistance to all marginalised groups and co-optation to all event organisers.

³² In Portuguese, she referred to *nossa bandeira*.

It has been demonstrated that not all forms of agency or resistance require or desire visibility (Mutch 2017). In accordance with Caroline Knowles (2013), however, I have emphasised that visibility matters in the case of this research. 'The visual traces of other's lives, social systems, (...) are all around us, whether or not we acknowledge them' (ibid: 667). However, and as was also argued with Ascensão (2011), invisibility can make it easier for power relations to be preserved, for negative media treatment, for housing and labour discrimination, or for hostility and violence.

I have argued that when we talk about (in)visibilities, we need to consider its various dimensions and apply an intersectional approach. In the case of *Batuku*, this includes particularly classed, racialised and gendered experiences. The events discussed in this paper have shown how *Batuku* as a popular cultural practice constitutes an important tool for challenging and renegotiating postcolonial power relations. It can thus be understood as a form of resistance or as a disruption into hegemonic public discourses and media representations. *Batukaderas* (re)claim spaces, re-valorise their positions, contest their marginalisation and offer 'counter-narratives' to omnipresent romanticisations and silences, both at the events where they perform and in broader society.

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