

Culture and
development
connection:
the case of *Rede
Carioca de Rodas
de Samba* (Rio de
Janeiro Roda de
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* Roda de samba: gathering to sing and play samba; informal at first, they developed standard structure, rules and behaviors known to participant musicians, singers and fans. (Translator Note – TN)

Introduction

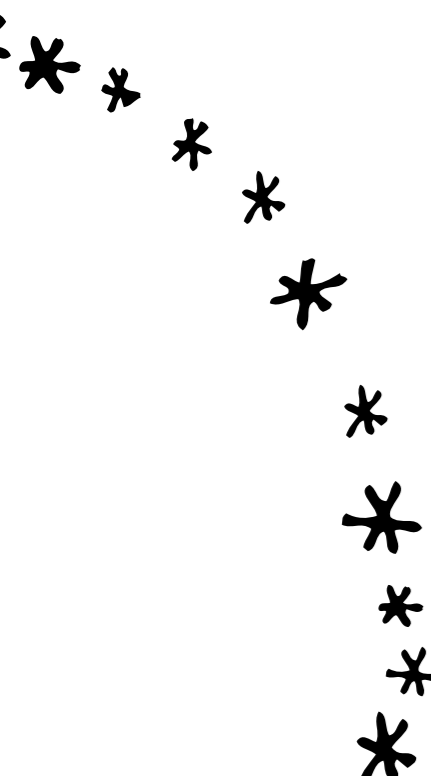
In light of the current debate on creative cities, this article discusses possible productive mobilizations offered by samba in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Based on agglomeration theories, we analyze the role *rodas de samba* play as catalysts for social and productive interactions, emphasizing how strategic they are for development. With this approach, we highlight the centrality of samba to the dynamics of productive coordination between local players and to the creation of an “atmosphere” that would be favorable for information and knowledge exchange that feed social creativity in the city. We propose the notion of a territorial samba production system in order to reflect on the relationship between samba culture and local productive system, exploring contradictions and potentialities that emerge in the metropolis of Rio in the framework of the creative city project. To do so, we analyze the case of *Rede Carioca de Rodas de Samba* (RS).

Creative cities: the case of the city of Rio de Janeiro

Since the 1990s, the creative city perspective has become widely accepted as a new development paradigm, guiding governmental and private initiatives globally. Rio de Janeiro (Olympic City) modernization process chose creative economy as one of its pillars for urban revitalization and repositioning in global economy. Since 2010, when Rio de Janeiro joined the Flanders District of Creativity Network, a number of actions have been taken to strengthen cultural and creative sectors. We highlight here Municipal Law 5,553/2013, which introduced the ISS tax incentive to foster cultural projects in the city. As a result, indirect funding (exemption from the ISS tax on services) increased from 9.7 million reais in 2009 to 53.5 million reais in 2016.¹ Other important actions included: the implementation of Rio Criativo incubator by the Rio de Janeiro state Department of Culture; the title of World Heritage as an Urban Cultural Landscape (UNESCO, 2012); and the expansion of direct credit lines for culture (proposal-based), etc.

A development perspective based on productive mobilization of culture and creativity opens up new possibilities for cities, but also poses complex challenges

¹ Investment forecast in the report “A gestão da cultura carioca 2013-2016”. Rio de Janeiro Municipal Department of Culture, 2016.



to local urban governance. Porto Maravilha, one of the pillars of Rio de Janeiro modernization, is an emblematic case of these issues, disputes, and conflicts.

With Porto Maravilha project, the harbor area underwent major transformations that included: the construction of *Museu de Arte do Rio* – MAR (Rio Art Museum, 2013), of *Museu do Amanhã* (Tomorrow Museum, 2015), and of *AquaRio* (2016); renovation of José Bonifácio Foundation (2016); the creation of the Olympic Boulevard (2016) and of the Distrito Criativo do Porto (Harbor Creative District, 2015); the attraction and installation of creative companies such as CityLab, Youtube Spaces, etc.; the rediscovery of *Cais do Valongo* (Valongo Wharf), African heritage archaeological site that recently became a World Heritage site (UNESCO, 2017).

These transformations in the harbor area brought to light ambivalent dynamics that reflect the complexity of territorial conflicts and actions of different players involved. On the one hand, despite urban improvements, this urban renewal also has negative effects such as (i) expropriations carried out by the authorities, and (ii) an expansion of the gentrification process in a context of fragile social housing policies and rising cost of living. On the other hand, local players reorganize themselves creatively, based on actions that express resistance and the need to reinvent their practices in the face of ongoing transformations. Particularly noteworthy are the reestablishment of community bonds, the revaluation of black cultural heritage and the emergence of new production arrangements.

This is an emblematic example that stresses the limits of urban governance models in creative cities with respect to the ability to deal with contradictions between capital deepening and development of material and symbolic conditions to serve local population. Research has shown the authoritarian nature of creative city projects that follow an essentially market-oriented narrative. These projects adopt a teleological, reductionist, and evolutionary perspective. Based on an ideal image that privileges a specific narrative, this conception of city “obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to a place in the queue of history” (MASSEY, 24, 2008). Thus, the creative city becomes the horizon for development, and the replication of good practices, a recipe for actions. This way, contradictions, conflicts and disputes surrounding projects development are concealed in an attempt to do away with the political dimension of social life to the detriment of the economic dimension.

However, this development perspective guided by specific interests of certain economic players can have dysfunctional effects on urban systems by: (i) confining

the potential reach of local social creativity to a sectoral and market perspective; (ii) neglecting or suppressing innovations that express the city cultural diversity, but do not fit into the idealized city model; (iii) dismantling logics of interaction between local players through an artificial construction of *creative clusters*; and (iv) deepening socio-spatial inequalities by fostering gentrification.

The city and the festival

Playing up a festive city image is increasingly strategic in creative cities’ narratives. For Gravari-Barbas (2011), the festive character takes on a crucial importance in the new urban context. On the one hand, the festive aspect invades different dimensions of contemporary urban life, making it an essential component of the way of making and living the city. On the other hand, the festive aspect projects itself at the international level as a territorial differentiation criterion, as it highlights city specificity through an image of urban vitality.

In cognitive-cultural capitalism (SCOTT, 1997, 2005), cities that productively mobilize their resources and specific assets gain a competitive advantage. This is so because the paradigm of competitiveness through differentiation highlights the strategic dimension of territorial competences as a factor of spatial competition (VELTZ, 1999). In this context, production dynamics require more open and flexible forms of cooperation as opposed to sequential and routine Taylorist processes. For Moulier-Boutang (2012), in an interface economy characterized by a high degree of interdependencies and complex interactions between production processes, it is impossible to ignore the importance of externalities.

According to Pecqueur and Benko (2001:38), “a durable differentiation of territories, i.e., one not susceptible to being checked by factor mobility, can only stem from its recognized specificity.” Assets and resources are divided into generic and specific. Assets are active factors and resources are factors to be explored, organized, or disclosed. Resource activation supposes their insertion in the production process. This way, they acquire an economic value measurable as a price. Unlike the generic, specific resources and assets are either not easily transferable, because their reallocation cost is high, or not transferable at all. Asset specificity is determined by the greater or lesser importance of transfer costs that can be covered. Specific resources, in turn, cannot be transferred, as they only exist in virtual state, that is, their constitution reflects the particular conditions of the place where they were created.

Based on theories of agglomeration (STORPER; VENABLES, 2005), we stress the strategic character of Rio's "festive atmosphere" for territorial development. We analyze the festive atmosphere as a specific resource and asset. As an asset, because the image of a festive city is *per se* a product that differentiates it in the global market of locations associated with tourism and entertainment. A resource because, like Marshall's "industrial atmosphere", Rio's festive atmosphere potentiates social and productive interaction dynamics in the city. Therefore, it is an instance of mediation that favors connections between different social groups and symbolic imaginaries, thus enhancing the circulation of information, ideas, and knowledge.

In Rio de Janeiro, the "street culture", characteristic of this festive atmosphere, plays a key role in bringing local players together. Thus, Rio's festive atmosphere is a core element of social creativity. From the point of view of territorial planning, seizing the creative process as an expression of collective intelligence – social creativity – is crucial to rethink relations between companies and territories in contemporary production dynamics. We explore the idea of social creativity as a potential that expresses itself as a "living and collaborative knowledge", stemming from interactions between different types of knowledge (technical, scientific, artistic, and experiential). This creativity draws on the communication experiences that are amplified in cities, connecting different sociocultural realities. Here lies the importance of proximity dynamics.

Schematically, we highlight two levels of interaction in social creativity: (i) global, made possible by telematics networks, space for the circulation of information and codable knowledge (replicable and more easily displaceable); and (ii) local, fed with interactions in daily life spaces that express themselves in contents produced and resignified based on local culture codes and values. Thus, high costs and its intangible and non-codable character make this knowledge impossible to transfer; it is linked to the context in which it took shape and reflects local specificities.

It is possible to analyze social creativity – a geographic phenomenon – based on the interactions that take place in the territories and can create environments that favor creative processes. While still virtual, these interactions include a large number of possibilities: from market-oriented innovations to the construction of new patterns of sociability and alternative forms of organization of social and productive life, such as, for example, collaborative economies.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, samba culture plays a key role in creating specific assets and resources, and in producing positive externalities. Samba schools,

*blocos de rua*² and *rodas de samba* are spaces of germination that potentiate encounters and exchange of knowledge, favoring collective learning dynamics and the emergence of creative processes. However, this reading supposes going beyond a point of view that reduces to mere commodities the power of social creativity expressed in samba manifestations. A new approach to the productive mobilization of samba requires recognizing the symbiosis between its multiple dimensions: socio-cultural (artistic expression and ways of life), economic (production and consumption), and political (struggle for the right to the city).

While samba as a product (specific asset) can be exported and replicated as a simulacrum in other global cities, local social creativity, despite the imaginary of popular festivals, does not become a product or replicable experience because it reflects local conditions. Knowledge derived from experience and accumulated, for example, in "masters" figures or *roda de samba* rituals cannot be coded. Its transmission is generational and happens through face-to-face contact.

Thus, the samba culture cannot be artificially instituted by decree. It is a living knowledge renewed in everyday experiences: in desires elicited by the festival imaginary, in artistic manifestations that occupy the streets to dispute and recreate the city, in different forms of association based on relations of affect, solidarity, and community spirit. It is also a tool for socioeconomic insertion.

Sistema Territorial de Produção do Samba Carioca – STPSC (Territorial System for Rio de Janeiro Samba Production)

The resumption of festivals in public spaces in Rio de Janeiro, especially with the expansion of *blocos de rua* and *rodas de samba*, has pointed to new perspectives into culture as a development vector. The strengthening of street carnival unveiled a qualitative change in ways of experiencing festivals and the city. On the one hand, it contributed to relativize the "Broken City" imaginary, encouraging people to move around the city in search of new festive experiences. On the other hand, it reinforced a conception of participation that goes beyond being an onlooker (consumer of the

² Blocos de rua: Group of people going out to sing and dance in the street during carnival. Today they are organized, have their own musicians and uniforms. Some of these *blocos* were instrumental in founding Samba Schools. (TN)

spectacle). People increasingly seek integration into festivals based on dynamics in which production and consumption are combined. The recent increase in demand for activities related to the festival imaginary, such as percussion workshops, illustrates this phenomenon that contributes to strengthening the dynamics of social creativity in the city.

This movement brings about initiatives and forms of organization that point to new possibilities for productive mobilization of samba for territorial development. The *Rede Carioca de Rodas de Samba* (RS) is one of many of these examples having *rodas de samba* as catalysts. The formation of the RS illustrates dynamics that are often elusive to public policy gaze and official statistics, which deal with large numbers. Public powers usually underestimate the development potential of these local and popular cultural initiatives, despite their direct economic importance and their contribution to the dynamics of social creativity in the city.

On the one hand, these initiatives prove to be powerful due to their ability to stimulate creative solutions for socioeconomic insertion and social transformation through culture. The complexity and richness of these initiatives lie, above all, in their ability to mobilize a great diversity of players and elicit a dialogue between different work practices and economic logics in the city.

On the other hand, these initiatives also prove fragile for a number of reasons: (i) economic valorization of spaces where they take place and risk of gentrification; (ii) inconsistency or lack of development policies based on strengthening these players and local arrangements; (iii) difficulties related to player training and qualification; (iv) highly bureaucratic institutional environment, etc. Many of these issues stem from the difficulty public powers have of understanding the role of cultural policies as development policies.

Territorial development perspective based on the French School of Proximity highlights the centrality of player coordination and its effects on the creation of specific resources/assets. Thus, territorial development reflects a “situated” process of social construction of players around common challenges and aims to reveal unknown resources. Thus, it supposes collective identification with a culture and a territory, and cannot be implemented by decree; nevertheless, public policies may be important, mainly when aimed at potentiating player productive mobilization conditions (PECQUEUR, 2005b).

Based on the contemporary debate on the relations between development and economy territorialization – Territorial Production Systems (MAILLAT, 2002) –, we propose the *Sistema Territorial de Produção do Samba Carioca* – STPSC (Rio de Janeiro Samba Territorial Production System), stressing the aspects below.

First, despite the extent and density of its manifestations, we highlight samba spatial configuration in the city. It’s to stand out the historical territorialization process of this cultural expression and the agglomeration effects it generated. Rio’s samba geography depicts resistance and forced dispersal towards the outskirts of the city, especially of the black and mestizo population. Secondly, calls the attention the ability to achieve social aggregation and boost interactions in the city by means of a “festive atmosphere” that, while translating itself as entertainment, is expressed as a feeling of belonging and of political, cultural, and identity resistance. Thus, Rio’s samba process of assertion and social legitimation is also a strategy of dispute and repositioning of marginalized populations in the city through festival. Thirdly, it’s to mention its widespread insertion in the metropolitan production fabric, connecting different networks of formal and informal economic activities. This insertion, which started in the phonographic industry in the early twentieth century, has expanded to virtually all sectors of the creative economy.

The STPSC perspective aims to discuss the connections and productive coordination that emerge around samba manifestations from a territorial planning point of view. Thus, samba schools, *blocos de rua* and *rodas de samba* are analyzed as strategic spaces of interaction (encounters, connections, and coordination) for different kinds of networks (social and productive) that operate at multiple scales and mobilize a variety of players (state, companies, social groups, etc.) and creative economy activities. This system integrates various circuits of urban economy, from activities such as theater, cinema, music, and tourism up to street vendors, residue collectors, seamstresses, small cultural producers, etc.

In this context, Rio’s samba manifestations are important pollination vectors that help setting up networks of productive social cooperation, crucial for preserving practices such as collaborative creation, bonds of trust and solidarity, information sharing and feelings of belonging. These intangible factors expressed in social practices manifested themselves as territorial competences capable of fostering territorial development dynamics and of strengthening differentiation-based competitiveness strategies.

Rede Carioca de Rodas de Samba – RS (Rio's Rodas de Samba)

The establishment of the *Rede Carioca de Rodas de Samba* (RS) helped strengthen STPSC. For thinking and acting based on local realities – *rodas de samba* and their surroundings –, but considering the city as a planning horizon, the RS can play a key role in building territorial pacts due to Rio's samba strong social and productive mobilization.

El pacto territorial es un instrumento de concertación de todas las fuerzas económicas y sociales presentes en el ámbito local con el fin de dirigir las a la realización de objetivos comunes de desarrollo. (CARMONA, p. 118, 2006).³

The RS construction started in late 2014, following heightened tensions and conflicts over the use of public space around Pedra do Sal *Roda de Samba*. This episode led to enhanced dialogue with local authorities. Samba artists saw a clear need to rethink forms of appropriation of this cultural heritage and economic asset, Rio's samba, based on a number of assumptions: (i) preservation and valuation of *roda de samba* as an artistic-cultural expression; ii) better working conditions for players involved, especially samba professionals; and (iii) coordination with other areas of the creative economy as a strategy toward *roda de samba* economic sustainability. Thus, given its strength and singularity in the city, the movement that originated RS deemed it necessary to empower samba as a local development tool, that also aims to improve the living conditions of the professionals involved.

Municipal Decree n. 41,036, signed on December 1, 2015, creates the *Programa de Desenvolvimento Cultural Rede Carioca de Rodas de Samba* (Rio's Rodas de Samba Network Cultural Development Program). This decree resulted from negotiations between *roda de samba* professionals, aligned with RS and local government. The establishment of RS is furthermore important because it means acknowledging the need to incorporate new information and knowledge to samba artists' traditional knowledge and practices. Rio Eixo Institute contributed to this by providing an environment rich in interactions with other players and experiences in the Rio' cultural scene: graffiti, hip-hop, and so on. As it used the Rio Eixo headquarters

as a meeting space, RS found itself in a plural, rich in stimuli and possibilities environment. Moreover, it is important to stress the role Rio Eixo Institute played as an institutional mediator in the area of Rio's municipal cultural policy, seeking to build effective bridges between local government spheres of deliberation and cultural manifestation representatives.

The decree that created the *Programa de Desenvolvimento Cultural Rede Carioca de Rodas de Samba* became a strategic tool for the RS, as it facilitated dialogue with important city's cultural players. In the public power sphere, RS focused on four fronts: (i) obtaining authorizations for events; (ii) raising funds through proposals and/or direct transfer; (iii) prompting reflection on the importance of *roda de samba* for the city's cultural and economic life, highlighting the need for specific public policies; and (iv) obtaining support for information production and management.

In addition to these institutional initiatives, RS also sought to bring all *rodas de samba* together and mediate the relationship between them, on the one hand, and goods and services suppliers and exhibitors (microentrepreneurs) in samba fairs, on the other hand. Bringing *rodas de samba* closer together proved an important exercise in agreeing on common agendas and goals, and strengthening practices of collaboration and joint creation.

The process of organizing *Circuito Carioca de Rodas de Samba* (Rio's Roda de Samba Circuit – RS Circuit), which took place from October 2016 to January 2017, made for the consolidation of partnerships and the definition of how coordination between players would work, with the RS as its central coordinator. Participants: *rodas de samba*, public powers, suppliers of goods and services, cultural producers, professionals, exhibitors, etc. The RS Circuit was key to testing and consolidating a number of concepts and strategies toward RS and *roda de samba* economic sustainability, such as Samba Fairs, *Roda das Rodas* (*Roda de Rodas*) and RS Research.

In broad terms, Samba Fairs aim at fostering a territorial arrangement based on coordination and partnerships between *rodas de samba*, suppliers of goods and services, and exhibitors. *Rodas de samba* would thus be the epicenter of coordination with other players in the creative economy: fashion professionals, gastronomy, crafts, etc. This format eliminates or reduces the need for intermediaries to market *roda de samba* and their partners' products, as Samba Fairs become points of sales. Proximity to the final consumer is an additional advantage this model offers, as it generates face-to-face contacts that facilitate information circulation and immediate feedback

³ A territorial pact is an instrument for cooperation between all economic and social forces present at the local level, that aims to direct these forces toward common development goals.

from the public. Event publicizing and attracting different audiences are other substantial benefits.

Moreover, the spatial configuration of samba fairs, with exhibitor booths surrounding the *roda de samba* space, creates a kind of “belt” that damps street vendor movement and competition with *roda de samba* in selling drinks. On the other hand, this configuration does not exclude street vendors, who are allowed to work in areas outside the booth “belt”. In a nutshell, Samba Fairs are an effort to build partnerships based, above all, on the logic of belonging. Thus, RS starts to organize itself beyond its original horizon – *rodas de samba* –, in order to act as an operator/mediator of the dynamics of social and productive interactions in the city.

In addition to direct gains, such as increased supplier profit and decreased *roda de samba* production costs, Circuito RS has also helped reduce uncertainties regarding event calendar and service payment, as well as improve information circulation among players, which are crucial aspects to balance economic systems. *Roda das Rodas* was designed as a get-together of all *rodas de samba* in RS; therefore, it is a strategy for bringing *rodas de samba* closer to the largest RS event.

The RS research⁴ produced hitherto unpublished data on the *roda de samba* reality in the city of Rio de Janeiro. *Roda de samba* public comes from different parts of the city, represents different social classes and ways of life, holds different symbolic representations in their cultural baggage. On a *roda de samba*, this diversity meets and interacts. Information and knowledge are often exchanged; values and codes are resignified; new projects are born and others are strengthened. In this process lies a key factor of local social creativity and a core aspect of Rio’s samba productive dimension for territorial development: the creation of instances of mediation that boosts social and productive interactions in the city.

According to the survey, 77% of the public is *roda de samba* regulars, mostly women (55%). Their age bracket is very wide, with a majority between 20 and 39 years old (62%). Their color or ethnicity distribution is: 50.1% of the public state they are black, 23% brown, 21.8% white, 1.4% yellow, 0.4% indigenous, 1.6% other and 1.6% did not inform. Regarding education, 63% of the public have attended or are attending

higher education: 28% graduated from higher education; 18% unfinished higher education; 17% hold postgraduate degrees. However, when we combined color or ethnicity data with schooling data and looked into each specific group universe, we found that the percentage of admissions to higher education is 76% for white, 57% for brown, and 56% for black individuals. Therefore, this significant variation shows a historical picture of inequality of opportunity in the country.

In addition to these rather general socioeconomic issues, our research also sought to identify *roda de samba*’s market potential. *Rodas de samba* were very positively assessed, totaling 94% of high and very high scores. Regarding average consumption in reais, 31% of respondents stated they spend more than 75 reais. Aggregating consumption brackets, we have that 48% of the public spend more than 55 reais on average, whereas 66% spend more than 45 reais on average. The survey pointed to an average audience of 500 people per event. If we take the 48 events/month organized by the RS *rodas de samba* as a reference and extrapolate this spending data to the average *roda de samba* audience, we can estimate an approximate monthly turnover of 1.3 billion real. This spending data is a parameter that can be used to evaluate *roda de samba*’s economy potential in the city.

In broad terms, besides directly providing infrastructure and other services that are crucial for publicizing and strengthening the image of RS *Rodas de Samba* (social media, press office, design, etc.), the RS Circuit helped align partnerships around a common project, mainly with production networks (suppliers, exhibitors, and professionals working with RS). Thus, it worked as an important experience in coordinating players involved with samba economy in the city through RS.

⁴ During this first phase of the research, 738 Public Profile questionnaires, as well as 24 Rodas de Samba Profile questionnaires, were administered to participants in 18 rodas de samba in the city.

Final considerations

The RS experience showed the crucial role samba organizations can play in connecting and coordinating productive processes within the creative economy. Samba has an unparalleled capacity for productive mobilization in the city of Rio de Janeiro, bringing together a wide variety of social and economic players. In this sense, RS Circuit was a rich experience of social construction of samba players and alignment of partnerships around territorial pacts based on common projects. In other words, an action that is able to potentiate territorial development dynamics in the city of Rio de Janeiro based on samba cultural manifestations.

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