CADERNOS AA

RITUAL ROLES OF “AFRICAN NIGHTS” DJs IN LISBON

Livia Jiménez Sedano¹
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

The objective of this paper is to explore the diverse roles performed by the DJs working at the so-called “African nights” of Lisbon. Based on a three-year ethnography, the reflection starts from a dialogue with the literature on Electronic Dance Music DJs for comparing both these cultures. The social encounters at these “African” parties are analysed as a contemporary secular ritual in which participants negotiate relevant categories of social belonging and each individual’s place in a postcolonial social structure through dancing. In this context, the socialization processes on the dancefloor take place through the music chosen, produced and mixed by specialized actors: the DJs. As experts in musical symbols efficient for the ritual, they are responsible for the community across several facets. First, they choose and convoke participants in such a way that they influence the ethnic structuring of the night. Second, they guide their emotional states along the night, making them pass through a series of phases until reaching the ritual climax so that the ritual becomes efficient. Third, they facilitate the networking process among community members, acting as society builders. In conclusion, these DJs play a highly important role in the structuring of postcolonial society.

Keywords: DJs, ritual, “African nights”, postcolonial dancefloor, dancing community

THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF DJs

The electronic dance music DJ: party leader, sonic entertainer, auditory artist, music programmer, record mixer, beatmatcher, cultural masher, music producer, creative music archivist, record collector, sex symbol, role model, upwardly mobile brand, youth marketing tool, dancefloor parent, witch-doctor, tantric yogi, cyborgian shaman, the embodiment of studio-generated music. (Rietveld 2013:1).

1 INET-md. Author’s contact email: liviajs@fcsh.unl.pt.

Rietveld opens a compilation of texts on DJs in diverse EDM² cultures with this paragraph. These actors play a role very similar to that of the *African nights*³ DJs of Lisbon, who are the focus of this paper. Nevertheless, we also encounter differences between the two types. The main specific feature is that our DJs become masters of ceremony in a postcolonial ritual, which makes their role acquire a rather concrete and local meaning in the city of Lisbon. In any case, the rich bibliography on EDM party DJs available since the 2000s and the existing scientific debate on the topic nevertheless constitute excellent starting points for our analysis. Keeping in mind that each theory is based on a concrete case study, let us first approach a brief overview of some ideas on the characterization of the DJ. As regards the centrality of his⁴ role in the night event, some authors have described the DJ as a group leader, party leader, “dance-floor parent” (cf. Rietveld 2013), or even as the main centre and defining feature of disco culture (Brewster and Broughton 2000). For Reitsamer (2011), the DJ is not the central ingredient and we should consider him just one important agent among others. In contrast, according to Lawrence (2013), in the cases he analyses, the DJs become simple animators, servants of both their audiences and their employers because of the current neoliberal socioeconomic context. From a more nuanced position, Mazzearella (2010) speaks about the DJ as “the magnetizer”, that is, a manager of the predispositions people bring into the club. From this perspective, he facilitates processes in which he is not the main role. García (2011:151) picks up this idea of “the magnetizer” and mentions his role as a lure for advertising the event. Some scholars consider the DJ as the leader of a spiritual community, and take terms from classical ethnographies such as “shaman” (St. John 2004, 2006), “witch-doctor” or “tantric yogi” (cf. Rietveld 2013). In a more mundane line of analysis, others have described his practical roles as a mixer, a music selector, disco collector, producer, promotor, business manager (Reitsamer 2011), or the music industry’s gatekeeper (Gavanna and Attias 2011). When the focus is on the DJ’s cultural action, Fontanari (2013) says that he acts as a cultural mediator, while Gavanna and Attias (2011) picture him as a cultural transformer who sets new trends, and Paulsson (2011) describes him as the key to structuring power relations on the dancefloor. Brewster and Broughton (2011) even claim that, for the case of DJs who become celebrities, some of these might be considered similar to revolutionary leaders able to transform society. For our empirical case, we would like to stress three general types of action: choosing and convoking community members, structuring the ritual time and rhythms, and managing the social relations that take place on the dancefloor. Later on, we will analyse each one of these roles in more detail and in dialogue with some of the aforementioned theories and authors. The main idea stems from how all the roles developed by the DJ make sense in a specific context, characterized here as the postcolonial dancefloor of Lisbon in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

THE MEETING AT THE DISCO AS A POSTCOLONIAL RITUAL

The meeting around social dance is characterized here as a contemporary secular ritual (Segalen 2005) with a performative dimension (Tambiah 1981) that develops in what Foucault (1966) calls a heterotopia: the club. In this context, socialization processes take the shape of what Delgado and Muñoz (1997) name “everynight life”, that crystallizes in what St. John (2015) labels “weekend societies”. In the specific case of the *African Lisbon nights*, social subjects

2 Electronic Dance Music.

3 *Emic* expression used in the field by many informants, especially by those who are night leisure professionals.

4 We deploy the masculine gender throughout the paper because all the DJs in our field are male.

re-negotiate their relative positions in a changing postcolonial social structure through dancing practices. In this context, DJs become relevant agents whose role consists of building dancefloors that combine a series of highly interesting characteristics: they are the result of a long history of relations between Africa and Portugal. The independence processes of the former *Portuguese* colonies only took place relatively recently⁵, so that some of the dancers still keep alive memories of colonial times, to the point that we can find formerly warring parties sharing the same dancefloor nowadays. The social structure based upon a hierarchy of racial categories gave way to a new society, apparently more equalitarian but still actually ethnically segregated to a certain degree. Prejudice against *Africans*⁶ and stereotypes still work (and continue working) in general society (cf. Machado 2001), as well as social rules that condition or hinder the kind of acceptable interactions between subjects labelled *African* and *Portuguese*. All these social dynamics have since progressively changed but without altering some basic patterns such as labour market segregation and, in some cases, residential segregation (Machado 1997).

The night leisure spaces that first developed during the eighties and in the beginning of the nineties in Lisbon tended to reproduce daily ethnic divisions at night. As immigration rates grew bigger, clubs targeting this audience proliferated: those were the golden years of the so-called *African discos*. With notable exceptions, each club had a specific clientele in terms of national origin, age group and social class, thus reproducing the diversity and stratification existing outside. In any case, the sociability patterns people displayed in them were ethnically marked. Except for a small group labelled *Portuguese* intellectuals, artists, and friends of immigrants, it was uncommon to find people who did not have experience of living in Africa among the clientele. The most popular couple dance style during the eighties and nineties was Antillean *zouk*, and many artists from the former Portuguese colonies produced versions of it under labels such as *kizomba* or *afro-zouk* (Cidra 2010). In the late nineties, the dance style got commodified under the category *kizomba* and met with great success. During the same period, a form of electronic dance music produced in Angola called *kuduro* became the favourite beat for youngsters labelled *African* (Marcon 2012). Since the beginning of the 2000s, the latest fashionable style produced in Angola, *afrohouse*, has become the most successful genre for those youngsters. Notably, the love for the aforementioned recent electronic dance music styles marks a clear distinction of youth labelled *African* from those who do not feel identified with those beats: older *Africans* and *European kizomba* aficionados. Nevertheless, the ethnic structuring of the night started changing during the hard times of the financial crisis. Many clubs entered in bankruptcy and different kinds of clients started meeting at some of the old and new places, producing unexpected changes in the social structure of the night. Nowadays, we can find highly heterogeneous dancefloors as regards their ethnic, age and social compositions and the cultural ways of socialization. In the end, the key to making these current *African night* rituals work in these postcolonial conditions lies in the hands of their masters of ceremony: the DJs.

5 In the general context of the independence processes of African states, the former Portuguese colonies were among the last to gain their freedom, in 1975.

6 All emic expressions appear in italics in this text. These include ethnic and ethno-national categories, such as *African*; as several authors have stated, they are objects of analysis and not scientific categories (cf. Brubaker 2002; Díaz de Rada 2008; Wimmer 2013).

METHOD

The research methodology derives from ethnography. For three years, I carried out fieldwork in *kizomba* dancing contexts in Spain (2012–2013) and Portugal (2013–2015): mainly, participant observation in *African discos*, *kizomba* dance schools and *kizomba* international festivals. This was complemented by interviews with DJs, dance teachers, dance students, frequent party goers, disco owners and promoters behind *kizomba* events and public relations. The interviews of DJs included in this paper have been selected according to the criterion of diversity in their life trajectories and that of the nightlife communities they manage. DJ João Turbo was born in Angola in 1965 and is thus the eldest member of our group. He has lived in Lisbon since he was sixteen, and is considered one of the classic DJs, recognized in the field as a musical expert and a relevant persona in the history of the *African nights* of Lisbon. He is alien to the *kizomba* phenomenon and correspondingly retains an interesting critical perspective as an external observer. DJ Oceano, born in São Tomé and Príncipe, has experienced djing both in his country of birth and in Angola. He has an interesting intermediate position between *African nights* and *kizomba* parties, being able to adapt to diverse audiences. DJ Pappy's was born in Guinea Bissau in 1982 and works in Madrid, where he is the main reference for *kizomba* aficionados. In contrast with the case of Lisbon, he is the only DJ labelled *African* in the field, which places him in the position of the biggest musical expert in spite of his youth. DJ Sergio Banderas was born in Portugal in 1979 and is a prominent figure for *kizomba* aficionados at both the national and international levels. He co-organizes one of the most popular *kizomba* parties with his wife Olga Chaabi (a *kizomba* dance teacher born in Mozambique): the River Parties, celebrated once or twice a month in different clubs. DJ Sabura, born in 1977 in a northern Portuguese village, works mainly at *kizomba* parties and festivals both in Portugal and abroad, but he rather interestingly learnt to play at *African clubs*. His enculturation in *African* music and dance did not happen as a standard process through dance schools. Instead, he discovered the world of *African discos* first hand socializing with some of his university residence mates of *African* origin, which makes him a versatile actor who understand the codes of diverse ambiances. DJ Marco Rookie was born in Portugal in 1978 after his parents arrived from Mozambique in the times of independence. He is also a basic reference to Lisbon *kizomba* parties. Unlike DJ Sabura, he focuses precisely on *kizomba* school audiences and seldom works in other ritual contexts. Finally, DJ Mario, twenty-two years old, still studying, is the youngest of our group. His family emigrated from Cape Verde in the seventies and he was born in Lisbon. He works as an amateur DJ at Sabura disco, his uncle's club. A good deal of the clientele are his friends, youngsters that consider themselves to be *Cape-verdeans*, just like himself. After having characterized our ethnography's DJs, let us analyse the main ritual roles they display every night.

THE ROLE OF CONVOKING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

One of the main roles of these agents is attracting community members to attend the ritual. Through the music tracks they choose and the way of sequencing and mixing them, every DJ develops a personal style that makes frequent participants feel at home. In this respect, he becomes the central element for defining night culture, just as Brewster and Broughton (2000) suggest with their concept of "DJ culture". He also constitutes a publicity hooker with his image printed on flyers, posters and other media, as García (2011) indicates. This becomes apparent when promoters try to launch a new party: one of the most important information pieces

(maybe the most important) for party goers is the DJ's name. During fieldwork in Madrid, I was able to witness the emergence of a new *kizomba* party and how the information circulated among aficionados. When asking them about the club and other aspects, one of the most experienced social dancers said: "I don't know that disco but I don't mind about that, Pappy's will be DJing it so it will be a great party."

In Lisbon, Arlindo, Sabura club's owner, wanted to attract a clientele beyond the frequent group of twenty-year-old *Cape-Verdeans*. In order to do so, he decided to dedicate Tuesday night to *kizomba* school people. The resident DJ, his nephew Mario, told me that he could not play "his music" (referring to styles like *kuduro* and *afrohouse*⁷) that night. He was supposed to play hours of *kizomba* instead, something that he found quite annoying. In this way, the DJ can not only convoke people through his musical selections, but also frighten them away, or even divide the night into segregated ritual communities:

(When I ask Mario about the differences between kuduro and afrohouse) He says that they are easily recognized, that they are rather different. I ask him if I can stay with him at the cabin one night as he plays those music genres so that I can learn. He answers that there is no problem, and that I should come on Friday or Saturday night, because on Tuesday his uncle does not allow him to play afro-beat, he wants to but his uncle does not let him do that. Later, I ask Arlindo about it and he says that it's true, if the DJ plays afrohouse, school people don't want to come anymore, and he has to insist on Mario not playing it. "He already has Friday and Saturday for that", he adds. (Excerpt from fieldwork diary, 29th January 2014)⁸

However, Arlindo's strategy did not work out as expected, and he resolved to hire DJ Banderas for Tuesday night. In this way, he had the house crowded with the clientele he had chosen. As we can see, the DJ's name succeeded as a publicity tool (cf. García 2011). This story from the field leads us to the next issue: in a postcolonial context such as that under analysis, the selection of ritual members very often translates into a certain ethnic construction of the dancefloor. According to DJ Sabura, the basic division is as follows:

(T)here are discos where much African music is played, but these are kind of commercial discos, a mixed audience, White...Africans and non-Africans...and then you find many places where you can count the number of Africans with your fingers...kind of...so many...I mean, just a few Africans go there, do you know what I mean? I mean, there are discos that spend the whole night playing kizomba, semba and I don't know what else, and they have no Africans, only school people go dancing there. (Interview with DJ Sabura, 19th March 2014)⁹

DJ Banderas drew a more complex map of the possible types of ritual communities. During the interview, he reflected as follows about the ethnic structuring of the *African night* and the ways a DJ can work depending on the dancefloor he desires:

And then, it has a deep relation with ethnicity. It depends on the audience: if they are Europeans, it's a music style; if they are Africans, it's another music style. If they are Cape-Verdeans, it's a music style; if they are Angolans, it's another music style. If they are Portuguese with Angolans, it's a music style. If they are Portuguese with other Portuguese, it's another music style. If they are Portuguese who learnt at school, it's a music style. If they are Portuguese who learnt...who took lessons with African teachers, it's already

7 Electronic music styles rather popular among youngsters, produced in Angola and danced individually at a fast tempo (around 120-140 BPM), in contrast with slower couple dance *kizomba* (around 85-96 BPM, according to most DJs interviewed).

8 All field notes and interviews are translated into English by the author.

9 Interviews shown in this paper were conducted in Portuguese and have been translated into English by the author.

another music style. [...] I can do it in two different ways: I can adapt to the audience that I see; OK, here we have Africans in their fifties, I will play this style that I know they will like, or here we have Europeans around twenty-five years old, I will play this genre that I know they will like, etc, etc. Or I can say like this: look, I want Africans in their fifties in the house; I will play this music style, they will naturally come and like it; the others come, they don't like it and they leave. (Interview with DJ Banderas, 12th February 2014).

In Madrid, the strategy designed by DJ Pappy's for introducing *kizomba* among the clientele of dance schools who were not used to that style consisted of mixing it with those genres that were already familiar to them: *salsa* and *bachata*¹⁰. During the interview, he talked about the discussions he had had with the promotor behind these *kizomba* events, Kevin (also originally from Guinea Bissau) about the best way to create the new ritual community. He also explained the differences between DJing for an *African* and for a *Spanish* audience:

(F)or Spaniards, that's a bit easier for me [...] because most of them are learning [...] For Africans, you have to play more African things, more traditional, more semba, passada, putting the music in the right moment and select the kizombas you know that marked a certain period [...]. (H)ere, we play salsa and bachata because people still have to learn, and what they can already dance is salsa, bachata [...] For example, there are more people dancing bachata than those dancing kizomba. So, we have to hitch them up to our rhythm, to catch them slowly, so I have to give them a little bit of what is theirs, or they will get bored. [...] I used to discuss this with Kevin. In the beginning, I wanted to play so much kizomba, more kizomba, more kizomba, it was me. [...] And he said you are playing too much kizomba, whatever, and I said if we want to promote kizomba's evolution here, we need to play it more, you see? We need to play it more to make it work. Because there are so many places where they can dance salsa and bachata. (Interview with DJ Pappy's, 9th June 2013)

The DJ's strategy (to a greater or lesser extent conditioned by the club owner or the party promotor's decisions) can not only produce ethnically segregated communities but can also generate the opposite result: creating a musical ambience where ethnicity does not structure the field, or, at least, where ethnicity loses its strength as a structuring principle. Whenever this happens, the DJ acts as a cultural transformer (cf. Gavanna and Attias 2011) or cultural mediator (cf. Fontanari 2013). For example, DJ Marco Rookie explained how the ethnic composition of his Hot Kizomba Nights clientele changed partly because of his musical decisions. He resolved to introduce *afrohouse* and *kuduro* music to attract an *African* clientele to the party, and which worked to some extent. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook other relevant factors that help explain this phenomenon, such as gender relations dynamics: the new clients were *African* men and it remained rather uncommon to see any *African* women. On this dancefloor, where the favourite music style was the couple dance *kizomba*, there was an implicit rule of automatically accepting every invitation to dance as the goal was to practice and improve dancing skills. In such circumstances, *African* men found an extreme easiness to socialize through dancing with *Portuguese* women, who would otherwise prove rather inaccessible in other situations. In this context, the *afrohouse* moment of the night turned into their minute of glory. It allowed them to have fun with male friends and to exhibit their repertoires of virtuoso movements, becoming the kings of the dancefloor in contrast with *non-African* men, who could not dance to it and withdrew from the spotlight. In this way, the *afrohouse* block introduced by DJ Marco Rookie brought about an interesting social transformation in this ritual community:

(Since) I introduced afrohouse in my night, we started to pull people in from other...other discos, didn't we? Well, it was since I started playing afrohouse, because it used to be just kizomba [...] today we go to an African disco and you don't only listen to kizomba. You listen to everything: salsa, afrobeat...but right then you only listened to kizomba because school people went there, practicing, dancing, but today it is more

10 Commodified dance styles from Latin America.

mixed because, on the afrohouse side, people started to mix a little bit, those people who just went there to practice with those people who also like afrohouse and kizomba, isn't it? We already have a bit of both, it's over there, I think. [...] That was our objective, introducing afrohouse slowly to search for other markets, and I think that we succeeded. (Interview with DJ Marco Rookie, 11th May 2014)

Thus, DJs do not only facilitate the social structuring of the night by criteria such as age, gender and ethnicity. Once they have convoked their respective communities of lovers of certain sounds, they then meet their greatest challenge: making the ritual flow in the culturally appropriate and symbolically efficient way for the participants congregated.

THE ROLE OF STRUCTURING RITUAL TIME AND RHYTHMS

On having convoked the ritual members, the main role of the DJ is usually termed “animator” (cf. Montano 2009, Lawrence 2013). In terms of ritual theory, it means managing emotional states of participants throughout the night in order to lead them appropriately to moments of what Durkheim (1912) called “collective effervescence”. The way the DJ works with emotions makes him become a “magnetizer” (Mazzarella 2010). He leads the community through the darkness of the night as if he were an oracle. All the DJs interviewed for this research agreed that it was the most difficult part of their job, and they shared the feeling that there was something magical in it, their best kept secret. At this point, the mysterious nature of the trade made the metaphor of the DJ as a shaman make some sense (St. John 2004, 2006; Reguillo 2000). In kinship terms, he became somehow the “dancefloor parent” (Rietveld 2013). When asked about the way to lead the community during interview, some informants referred to mystery: “Hey! That's my little secret! Hahaha”. (DJ Marco Rookie, 11st May 2014). “It's complicated, because sometimes the house has a... it's the resident DJ who has a certain secret that only he knows”. (DJ Turbo, 22nd May 2015)

In order to obtain this goal, the DJ has to structure the ritual time through the music tracks chosen for each moment, the volume, tempo, sound characteristics and the way of mixing. Collective emotions guided by the DJ take the shape of waves that rise and fall, heating up and cooling down, reaching several peaks of maximum intensity and moments of calm and rest. This is what Wolf (2001) called the “emotional contour” of ritual. DJ Marco Rookie reflected about the relation between music and the emotional line as follows:

Every music has a different kind of energy, doesn't it? There is music that has a slower energy. People feel more relaxed. There are other kinds of music that have a higher level of energy and make people feel more excited, don't they? [...] you have to create peaks of energy for the people, because they need it to get through the whole night. If you are always on a low level of energy, people get sleepy and go home. If you are always on top, people get tired and go home. [...] when I say this, I'm not talking about the fast tempo of the music, I'm talking about the music's energy. There is slow music that transmits much energy to people, isn't there? Let's say that there is fast music that doesn't transmit any energy at all. [...] It has nothing to do with beats per minute. It has to do with that, but not exclusively with that. It has to do with the music's melody, the tones, for example: if I play music at a minor chord, and if I pass to a major chord, there is a crescendo of emotion. People can feel it but they don't know why, and it was because I changed to music playing at a major chord, and that's the way they feel it. [...] The objective is reaching the end of the night, four hours, with the dancefloor crowded, on top. (Interview with DJ Marco Rookie, 11st May 2014)

Every DJ knows well the community that trusts in him to make the ritual develop in an efficient way and according to their expectations. Following a religious metaphor, this consists

of a relationship based on an intimate knowledge of the faithful, of the ways to induce concrete feelings and emotions following certain routes. DJ Oceano described his way of structuring his community's time and emotion during a typical night, with an audience of his generation, in their twenties and thirties:

I first analyse the house. Usually, when you have already played in a place, you know it, don't you? You get there, you are not going to start playing all the good music because people are just arriving at the place. So what you usually do when getting there, you play those tracks that were great hits some years ago, you play that music. When people start filling the place and the house gets better, you start playing the good music, and you do that for people to jump to the dancefloor, for people to start dancing. When the dancefloor is crowded, well constituted, full up, you start increasing the BPM in order to make the adrenaline rise, we could put it like this. [...] The peak of the night usually starts rising around two in the morning, around two o'clock, three o'clock, the peak starts rising, why? Because that's the way I win some comfortable margin to extend the night until the morning. [...] In the parties where I play, which run until the morning, until seven in the morning, my high peak starts rising around two o'clock. I play all that music for dancing individually, people get crazy, and then I go down a little bit. I go to kizomba again, around 90 BPM, and then you play a bit more until five o'clock. You will have a high peak again, and then you keep it there until the end of the party, you end up the party with a kizombada for those who stayed, or for those who wish to dance, they dance, but we usually end up the party at the highest peak. It's that music, afrohouse [...] and people end up clowning around, it's usually like this in Africa, everything ends up like this. (Interview with DJ Oceano, 21st April 2014)

DJ Turbo serves as a contrasting case. He is used to an audience of his generation, in their forties and fifties, and the description of the typical night ritual he guides is partially different. The music symbols that lead to collective effervescence belong to danceable styles successful in the eighties, mainly *zouk* (cf. Guilbault 1993). Although DJ Oceano also plays *zouk*, the highest peak of the night comes through recent electronic kinds of music produced in Angola (*kuduro* and *afrohouse*), that don't form part of DJ Turbo's repertoire. In general, when I asked DJs for a description of the night trajectory, everyone stressed that they were drawing a general abstract guideline to answer my question and it didn't always work out that way. They take decisions depending on the dancefloor's state at every moment of the night, and the strategy changes from one night to another. It means that one of the main skills the DJ needs to master is the reading of the dancefloor. When the symbolic sonorous material does not reach the desired effect and the intensity line of the night does not follow the right path, it's the moment to change strategy. DJs have empty dancefloor panic: in other words, they are afraid of guiding inefficient rituals that may end up abruptly. Because of this fear, they develop a series of resources to fix the night in case things go wrong. For example, DJ Turbo talked about one of the tricks of the trade he learnt:

And so, this is what I learned when I worked at Kudissanga (a disco) [...] Sometimes I played the music, one track, nobody jumped to the dancefloor, I played another track, nobody entered the dancefloor...what did I realize? It has to do with years of experience, doesn't it? I realized that sometimes I was playing some music and nobody danced but there were people sitting down and doing this (he makes a movement of tapping with his feet on the ground, as if he was following the rhythm), accompanying the music [...]. That means something. It means that the music is not that bad, it's not that bad (...) And so (laughter), in what refers to my experience, what I know in terms of the music I play, I tried always to play a better track...And so, if you play one better than the previous one, he will then get up and jump onto the dancefloor. (Interview with DJ Turbo, 22nd May 2015)

The DJ not only takes the music into account but also other issues such as the consumption of alcohol or other substances, as well as the time they take to produce certain effects on socialization processes. He can also play with other supporting elements such as lights and visual effects changing throughout the night. As happens in every ritual, all these strategies

serve the goal of socialization: the making, confirmation, revitalization and actualization of social bonds.

THE ROLE OF HAND-WEAVING COMMUNITY BONDS

According to Merriam's seminal work, one of the most important functions of music is contributing to the integration of society (1964:226). When analysing the kind of social bonds people build at EDM parties, García (2011) proposes the term "liquidity", a kind of ephemeral solidarity displayed on the dancefloor. In his theory, music is the material through which people create liquidity temporal networks. In general, we can claim that the nature and characteristics of bonds developed in night parties depend largely on the musical symbols offered by the DJ, combined with other aspects of his performance (cf. Ramstedt 2016). This phenomenon becomes especially apparent when there are technical problems that lead to silence in the middle of the night. Such an abrupt interruption to the ritual once happened at Sabura club:

At a certain moment of the night, when they are fixing it (the sound system that broke down), they turn everything off and the music stops. Suddenly, the place looks empty. It suffers a radical change. This situation makes me realize how important music is. Music is what dresses the club, it is what makes it be what it is. Otherwise, the place looks charmless. Music is what gives life to the place, it is even more important than architecture. Indeed, music is the social architecture in which relations take place. It's weird, but without music even the temperature seems to be colder. Music is what makes people get there, this is what joined them all together. It seems as if everything else is unnecessary. What these people have in common is their love for that music, the way that music makes them feel, that is what is meaningful for them. (Excerpt from fieldwork diary, 2nd February 2014)

Without music to hold on to, in this short silent period of time, emotional journey mates become an aggregate of strangers concentrated in the same physical place, out of reasons to explain their co-presence. However, this is not only about a general feeling of musical empathy. Concrete kinds of music help people establish specific social bonds with others. As we could see in the previous section, well-known *afrohouse* and *kuduro* hits give some actors the opportunity to exhibit their dance skills and put themselves in a high rank in the dancefloor society. Other music styles for dancing in couples, such as *kizomba*, allow people to approach others and start, keep or revitalize concrete social relations. Anyhow, music alone does not produce this effect. The presence of an expert is essential, somebody who knows in which moment of the ritual, how, and at which volume, speed, tempo, etc., to play the music. I had the opportunity to witness the relevance of the DJ's role in these processes on several occasions. For example, the night I spent in DJ Mario's cabin at Sabura club, I observed the following situation:

03:50 Kizomba: the transition is made with a brief silence between the end of the last *funaná* and the beginning of the first kizomba. The change is a bit radical¹¹ and the two tracks could not easily be overlapped, but he did it in such a way that the transition is smooth. I ask him why he made that dramatic change (I thought there would be no more kizomba tonight, that it was only for the warming-up first part of the night). He says that some people had sat down, left the party. By playing kizomba, he explains, boys would go invite the girls to dance, just so that they would not get bored. Things happened just as he had predicted. I feel impressed by the exactitude of his calculations. With the opening bars of the first kizomba, some boys who were sitting or leaning on the wall or the bar approached the girls sitting on the sofas. After a few kizombas, everyone in the club is dancing, the dancefloor is packed. (Excerpt from fieldwork diary, 2nd February 2014)

11 *Funaná* is a musical style from Cape Verde that is a much faster genre than *kizomba*.

In this ethnographic story, an appropriate reading of the dancefloor by the DJ facilitated the development of socialization scenes that participants needed to display at that very moment. In this respect, the DJ acts as a clinical psychologist, an applied sociologist and an engaged anthropologist of the dancefloor. Reading the dancefloor does not only involve decoding emotional states, but also elaborating a non-explicit sociogram over which the DJ acts through musical messages. All these implicit communications become apparent when things don't work. One night, I witnessed how Kora Club's DJ sent explicit verbal messages with his microphone in order to make people jump to the dancefloor, after insisting on playing *kizomba* hits for some time. Some features of Kora Club's space organization made the task of inviting people to dance harder than usual. According to the general rule (that I could find in most Lisbon *African discos* I worked in), men invite women to dance, but at Kora Club men had an extra difficulty in developing their expected cultural role. Women used to sit on a concrete area beside the dancefloor, while men used to stay on the opposite side. In this situation, a man who desired to invite a woman to dance had to cross the empty dancefloor under everybody's curious gaze until reaching the intended girl. In case of rejection, the man refused in public would have to cross back over the empty dancefloor under the mocking expression of other party goers. In these circumstances, the DJ needed more tools other than music to warm the dancefloor:

The first to open the dancefloor are a couple composed of a man in his forties and the woman he invites. [...] They dance some themes. Another couple risks jumping on the dancefloor but it is later left empty. The music is *zouk* and old *kizomba* [...]. The dancefloor is still empty, and the DJ takes the microphone and says that men should get up and go invite the girls because they are looking forward to dancing. Some people laugh. People are talking, or looking at others in silence. (Excerpt from fieldwork diary, 31st January 2014)

This form of intervention, speaking over a microphone, makes up part of the DJ's expected role as animator. Actually, this is just a verbal manifestation of a musical discourse he had been displaying without success. Revitalizing social relations, however solid or liquid (cf. Bauman 2000, 2003) they may be, is the deepest sense of any ritual. The DJ's role in this respect is undeniable.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper we have explored the *African nights* DJ roles drawing on some metaphors found in the EDM literature as a source of inspiration alongside others we propose here. In his role as a community convenor, the DJ becomes a lure, a group leader and, in a post-colonial context, he may play the role of cultural mediator and transformer. When structuring ritual time, he acts as an animator, magnetizer, parent of the dancefloor, oracle and shaman. In his dimension as social bond weaver, he turns into a clinical psychologist, applied sociologist and engaged anthropologist. As a conclusion, DJ social actions are rather rich and complex and hence we should consider him as a highly relevant actor in the structuring of postcolonial society.

REFERENCES

- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- _____. 2003. *Liquid Love: on the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brewster, Bill, and Frank Broughton. 2000. *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey*. New York: Grove Press.
- _____. 2011. *The Record Players: DJ Revolutionaries*. New York: Black Cat.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2002. "Ethnicity without groups". *European Journal of Sociology* 2:163-189.
- Cidra, Rui (2010) Kizomba. In Castelo-Branco, Salwa (dir.) *Enciclopédia da Música em Portugal no Século XX A-C*. Lisboa: Temas e Debates/Círculo de Leitores.
- Delgado, Celeste F. and José E. Muñoz. 1997. "Rebellions of Everynight Life". Pp. 9-32 in *Everynight Life. Culture and Dance in Latin/o America*, edited by Celeste F. Delgado and José E. Muñoz. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Díaz de Rada, Ángel. 2008. "¿Dónde está la frontera? Prejuicios de campo y problemas de escala en la estructuración étnica en Sáapmi." *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* LXIII(1):187-235.
- Fontanari, Ivan Paolo. 2013. *Os DJs da Perifa: Música Eletrônica, Trajetórias e Mediações Culturais em São Paulo*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Foucault, Michel. 2009 (1966). *Le Corps Utopique, Les Hétérotopies*. Paris: Editions Lignes.
- García, José Luis and Honorio Velasco (dirs.) 1991. *Rituales y proceso social*. Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura.
- García, Luis-Manuel. 2011. "Can you feel it too?" *Intimacy and affect at electronic dance music events in Paris, Chicago, and Berlin*. University of Chicago, Unedited Dissertation.
- Gavannas, Anna and Bernardo Alexander Attias. 2011. "Guest Editor's Introduction to the Special Issue on the DJ". *Dancecult. Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 3(1): 1-3.
- Guilbault, Jocelyn. 1993. *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Machado, Fernando Luís. 1997. "Contornos e especificidades da imigração em Portugal". *Sociologia: Problemas e Práticas* 24: 9-44.
- _____. 2001. "Contextos e percepções de racismo no quotidiano". *Sociologia: Problemas e Práticas* 36: 1-28.
- Marcon Nilton, Frank. 2012. "Identidade e estilo em Lisboa: kuduro, juventude e imigração africana". *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 24: 95-116.
- Mazzarella, William. 2010. "The Myth of the Multitude, or, Who's Afraid of the Crowd?" *Critical Inquiry* 36 (4): 697-727.
- Merriam, Alan P. 1964. "Uses and functions", Pp. 209-228, in *The Anthropology of Music*, Alan P. Merriam. Illinois: Northern University Press.
- Montano, Ed. 2009. "DJ Culture in the Commercial Sidney Dance Music Scene". *Dancecult. Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1(1): 81-93.
- Moorman, Marissa. 2008. *Intonations. A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to Recent Times*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Kottak, Conrad Philip. 2011. *Antropología cultural*. Madrid: McGraw Hill.
- Rietveld, Hillegonda C. 2013. "Introduction". Pp. 1-5, in *DJ Culture in the Mix: Power, Technology and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*, edited by Bernardo Alexander Attias, Anna Ganavas and Hillegonda C. Rietveld. New York and London: Bloomsbury.
- Reguillo, Rossana. 2000. *Emergencia de culturas juveniles*. Buenos Aires: Norma.
- Reitsamer, Rosa. 2011. "The DIY Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass DJs in Vienna". *Dancecult. Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 3(1): 28-43.

- Segalen, Martine. 2005. *Ritos y rituales contemporáneos*. Madrid: Alianza.
- St. John, Graham. 2004. *Rave Culture and Religion*, *Routledge Advances in Sociology*, 8. London: Routledge.
- _____. 2006. "Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion: an Overview, Special Issue." *Culture and Religion* 7 (1): 1-25.
- _____. 2015. "Introduction to Weekend Societies: EDM Festivals and Event-Cultures". *Dancecult. Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 7(1): 1-14.
- Ramstedt, Kim. 2016. "Ladies and gentlemen. Nostalgised Pavilion Dance Culture as a Performative Resource in the We Love Helsinki Club Concept". *PULS* 1: 48-66.
- Tambiah, Stanley J. 1981. *A Performative Approach to Ritual*. London: British Academy.
- Wimmer, Andreas. 2013. *Ethnic Boundary Making*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, Richard K. 2001. "Emotional Dimensions of Ritual Music among the Kotas, a South Indian Tribe". *Ethnomusicology* 45(3): 379-422.

Date received: 2017-05-30

Date accepted: 2017-10-22