

Research Article

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African Nightclubs of Lisbon and Madrid as Spaces of Cultural Resistance

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Abstract: The main objective of this article involves describing how *African* nightclubs of Lisbon have become spaces for cultural resistance against certain representations of African-ness, taking Madrid as a contrasting case. Since the 1970s, the so-called *African* nightclubs of Lisbon have constituted spaces for gathering and nurturing a sense of community for immigrants from Portuguese-speaking Africa. Commonly regarded suspiciously by most *Portuguese* citizens, commodification of the couple dance labelled *kizomba* during the 1990s helped changed their status. However, most *African* research participants do not recognise their beloved dance in the commodified version of *kizomba*. In this context, I analyse the commodification process as a form of symbolic violence that disguises postcolonial structural inequalities and unsolved conflicts through a discourse of neutral “approaching of cultures” on the dance floor. Moreover, from the point of view of a meritocratic symbolism, this discourse portrays the performances displayed at *African discos* as “basic” and unworthy. After exploring several ways of resistance to commodified *kizomba* displayed by *African discos* clientele, I conclude reflecting on the increasing symbolic power of global industries for naming social groups, structuring practices and exercising symbolic violence in late modernity.

Keywords: African-ness, *kizomba*, resistance, commodification, symbolic violence

Introduction

Since the late sixties, a series of nightclubs have been opened in Lisbon devoted to music and dance popular in Portuguese-speaking Africa. From what Dwyer and Jones call a “White socio-spatial epistemology” (Dwyer and Jones, *White Socio-spatial Epistemology*), these spaces were ethnically marked as *African discos* in the urban imaginary of citizens. The objective of this article is to analyse how these nightclubs have turned into spaces for cultural resistance against postcolonial misrepresentations of African-ness. Taking Madrid as a contrasting case, the article explores the collective agency of people attending these clubs throughout the recent history since the independence of the former colonies in 1975.

This work stems from my postdoctoral project “Dancing ethnicities in a transnational world,”¹ which contains the general objective of exploring the diverse ways in which ethnicity is constructed out of social dance contexts. Between 2013 and 2015, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in *kizomba* dancing contexts in Spain and Portugal: mainly participant observation in the so-called *African*² *discos*, *kizomba* dance schools and *kizomba* international festivals. It involved taking lessons, socializing with aficionados and party-goers, dancing with informants, having a good deal of informal conversations, combining strategies of

1 This postdoctoral project was funded by the FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Government of Portugal).

2 Ethnic and ethnonational categories are considered objects of analysis and not scientific categories (cf. Wimmer 2013, Brubaker 2002, Díaz de Rada 2014, Jiménez 2018). For this reason, they appear in italics.

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more (i.e., intensive dancing nights) or less (i.e., observing from the DJ's place or behind the bar) participant observation and writing down dense fieldwork diaries throughout three years. This was complemented by 33 in-depth interviews with DJs, musicians, dance teachers, dance students, nightclub owners and promoters behind *kizomba* events as well as their public relations contents.

The article's structure is as follows: in the next section, I propose to look at the history of the so-called *African discos* of Lisbon as spaces of cultural resistance, stressing how music and dance symbols were charged with connotations of pride, distinction and positive self-definition in a hostile environment of unsolved interethnic conflicts. In section three, I continue developing this historical context to look at the processes of *kizomba* commodification and globalisation, proposing the concept of symbolic violence as an inherent dimension to them. In the following two sections, I focus on strategies of cultural resistance to *kizomba* commodification found on the dance floors of Madrid and Lisbon in which social actors labelled *Africans* display their collective agency. First, I explore the practices of avoiding the commodified *kizomba* environment in each city, as well as mocking practices of the dance school style that take place in Lisbon. In section five, I analyse the gender dimension, briefly setting out examples of female partygoers labelled *African* refusing to dance with *kizomba* school aficionados. In the concluding section, I stress how relevant transnational industries have become in late modernity in two related aspects: their capacity to define ethnic groups, structure the fields of practices and to exercise symbolic violence at the global level.

Nightclubs as Spaces of Resistance: A Brief History of *African Discos* in Lisbon

Lisbon became the European city with the highest proportion of *African* immigrants during the 1990s according to official statistics (Machado, "Profile and specificities of immigration in Portugal") as a result of the deep historic connections that date back to fifteenth-century colonisation. After independence in 1975, the colonial transoceanic social structure based upon a hierarchy of racial categories gave way to a new society, apparently more equalitarian but actually still ethnically segregated at least to a certain degree. In Portugal, prejudice against people labelled *African*, and their associated stereotypes still apply in general society (Machado, *Contexts and perceptions of racism in everyday life*; Almeida, *A Land Coloured Sea. Race, Politics and Identity Culture*; Batalha, *The Cape-Verdean Diaspora in Portugal. Colonial Subjects in a Postcolonial World*, Hoffman, *Diasporic Networks, Political Change and the Growth of Cabo-Zouk Music*) coupled with 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 ever altering some basic underlying patterns such as labour market segregation and residential segregation that impact on large numbers of *African* citizens and their descendants (Machado, "Immigrations and immigrants in Portugal: regulation parameters and contexts of exclusion"; Machado and Abranches, "Limited social integration dynamics. Cape-Verdeans and Hindus' socio-professional paths in Portugal"; Almeida, *A Land Coloured Sea. Race, Politics and Identity Culture*; Cardoso and Perista, "The forgotten city: poverty in marginal areas of Lisbon"; Bordonaro, "Guetto Six. Anthropology occupies the space"). In this postcolonial context, the *African* nightlife of Lisbon has developed as a cultural response to the politics of segregation, economic vulnerability and cultural misrepresentation that social actors racialised as "African" suffer in their everyday lives.

A series of nightlife spaces devoted to music popular in Portuguese-speaking Africa became popular from the late 1970s onwards (Jiménez, "Ritual Roles of 'African Nights' DJs in Lisbon"). In the early years after the colonial independence wars, musicians and leisure entrepreneurs from Portuguese-speaking Africa arrived in Lisbon and started opening music clubs to make a living (Cidra, "Cape Verde in Portugal, Music of"). One iconic example is Bana, a prestigious artist from Cape Verde who opened one of the first music clubs in the city center in 1976: Novo Mundo, which would later change its name to Monte Cara (Cidra, "Bana") and then Enclave, although most people would just refer to the venue as "Bana." The well-known musician Tito Paris used to play in the crowded house he owned, Casa da Morna, while Dinah and José Correia, two returnees from Angola who used to own nightclubs in Luanda, opened the emblematic disco

A Lontra in the heart of Lisbon in 1976. During the 1980s and 1990s, the rates of immigration from Africa rose dramatically, driven by the ongoing expansion of the Portuguese economy (Machado, “Profile and specificities of immigration in Portugal”), and accordingly experienced an enormous rise in the number of nightclubs. Some of the most popular discos of those times were Mussulo, Sussussú, Sarabanda and Nells, owned and/or managed by people from diverse Portuguese-speaking African countries involved in the leisure or music industry.

Since the first clubs opened in the 1970s, these spaces turned into ethnically marked *African discos* in the imaginary of citizens resulting from a combination of factors. Firstly, many clients with an experience of life in Africa gathered in those clubs because they sought to activate their kinetic memories of past life experiences with other people suffering from the same homesickness. In this sense, they together built an “Africa made in Lisbon” through sharing music and dance symbols. In a hostile context, this need of expression through music and dance became much stronger than it used to be in the homeland and this kind of space correspondingly proliferated. Secondly, the politics of not allowing people labelled *Black* into the many non-ethnically marked clubs of the city (cf. Machado, “Contexts and perceptions of racism in everyday life”) often led party goers to concentrate in those clubs owned and managed by other actors racialised as *Africans*, where they hoped to find a friendlier ambience. According to Fernando, an experienced nightclub manager who arrived in Portugal in the aftermath of Mozambique’s independence, the fear of being denied access to the non-ethnically marked clubs of the city still affects weekend plans nowadays:

(People) were often stopped at the door, it happened very often. They reached the door, they were not allowed in, they were told that the house had the right of admission reserved [...] It happened, and it still happens nowadays, it happened to me on several occasions. It is a politics of not wanting Black people in the house, and it still happens nowadays. [...] For example, once a year I organise the “White Party” when people have to come dressed in white. There are people who think that only White people are allowed into this event, and we have to explain to them that it’s not the case, it’s just a thematic party. (Interview with Fernando, 1st April 2014)

Nevertheless, we should not conclude that these spaces displayed any *African* solidarity regardless of principles such as social class and nationality of origin, which also governed the politics of access. Since the 1990s, the social patterns of immigration became widely varied in terms of nationality of origin, gender, social class and rural/urban origins (Machado, Profile and specificities of immigration in Portugal). Correspondingly, the landscape of *African discos* also evolved into a more varied range traversed by the same principles of stratification that ruled daily life. While doing fieldwork in Sabura Club, Rolando Semedo, a musician from Cape Verde, told me that he found the recent changes associated to the globalisation of *kizomba* astonishing, and they brought back memories from his past:

I tell Rolando that some people have told me Black people were not allowed into many discos of Portugal, and he says that it’s true: “they looked at you at the entrance and they didn’t let you in, it happened to me! Even in some African discos, they wouldn’t let you in, Africans themselves ... and look now, everything has changed so much, it’s incredible how everything has changed. (Fieldwork diary, 5th May 2014)

In any case, we should not conclude that only individuals racialised as *Black* visited (and visit) these spaces. Frequent attendants with an experience of life in Africa include returnees labelled *White*, their offspring who had never set foot in Portugal before 1975, the descendants of mixed families with a wide variety of skin colours, and *White* war veterans who had become passionate about Africa. Moreover, certain clubs such as B.leza always attracted an audience composed of intellectuals and artists who may not have experience of life in Africa but who felt attracted to these spaces that brought fresh new cultural trends into the post-dictatorship city. In the case of A Lontra, a club located close to the national parliament, *Portuguese* politicians went to the venue after work and even held secret meetings in rooms reserved for them by the owners. In the case of Mussulo, considered a high-status place, the club became fashionable for football stars and other celebrities in the 1990s. In addition, colleagues, friends and relatives of all the aforementioned kinds of visitors, who are not labelled *Black* or *African* in their everyday lives, were invited and have since become members of these nightclub societies formed in *African clubs*. *Kizomba* teacher

Tomás Keita, who arrived in Lisbon from Guinea Bissau in the 1990s, remembered his first years in Lisbon as follows:

In Portugal, in the past, the only way to socialize with ... because it was work, home, the only way to socialize was going to *African discos*. There you could find people from other countries and I always had many connections with former Angolan dancers that used to visit these places [...] The African ambience was never closed. There were not many White people because they thought that in the African ambience they would find just problems [...]. The ones who did use to go are those who socialize with Africans in the neighbourhood, at school, those were the ones who used to go. (Interview with Tomás Keita, 23rd April 2014)

Summing up, in a postcolonial scenario of unsolved conflicts, houses devoted to music popular in Portuguese-speaking Africa opened in Lisbon and turned into ethnically marked spaces that served as shelters where visitors could find cultural comfort and/or engage in an ambience they felt attracted by. The popular music and dance symbols displayed in them acquired the specific meaning of collective resistance to a hostile society that looks down on people labelled *Black* and/or *African*. The popular music and dance for having fun displayed in these spaces, which includes global pop music from non-African countries such as Brazil and the USA, metamorphosed into *African music* and *African dance*, turning them into powerful symbols of cultural resistance and unity in this postcolonial context.

The Commodification of *Kizomba* as Symbolic Violence

Since the 1990s, certain social dances popular in Portuguese-speaking African states and their diasporas in Europe became commodified in Portugal with the most successful example being the partner dance labelled *kizomba*, which has since spread along global salsa circuits to become a dance craze among middle class consumers all over the world (Soares, “Between Luanda, Lisbon, Milan and Cairo. Diffusion and practice of kizomba”; Jiménez, “From Angola to the World”, From the World to Lisbon and Paris: how structural inequalities shaped the global kizomba industry”; Kabir, “Oceans, Cities, Islands: Sites and Routes of Afro-Diasporic Rhythm Cultures”). Even though this movement has contributed towards improving the image of African-ness in Europe by associating it with modernity and cosmopolitanism, and thus helping move beyond the previous stereotype of poverty and backwardness, most of the *African* research participants living in Lisbon expressed rather ambivalent feelings towards this phenomenon. On the one hand, they felt pride in seeing what they consider their culture rendered visible and highly valued at the international level. On the other hand, they deemed that it was only poorly represented on stage, on dance floors and in dance schools to the point that they did not recognise their beloved dance in the commodified version. Instead of constituting just a cold and rational critical statement expressed from the position of an external observer, they seemed to feel pain, anger or some kind of disturbance when looking at and talking about performances by aficionados. Even though social dance is usually regarded as merely a form of relaxing and having fun, and correspondingly distant from the hard issues social sciences are interested in (Farnell, “It Goes Without Saying-but Not Always”), these heated reactions made evident how kinetic symbols are charged with strong political meanings (Giurchescu, “The Power of Dance and its Social and Political Uses”). Although among its explicit objectives the *kizomba* movement has “giving value to Africa” and “bringing cultures together” on the dance floor, it has ironically backfired, at least to some extent, by triggering conflicting tensions that did not exist before (at least, as expressed in these terms) and a corresponding reaction of cultural defence among *African* partygoers who feel misrepresented by the dance style.

In this context, I propose to analyse the commodification of *kizomba* as a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power”). First, because it spreads a discourse of the commodified dance floor as a democratic and neutral space that fosters the “approaching of cultures.” This multicultural discourse turns asymmetry into neutral difference, ignoring the ongoing processes of labour and residential segregation that place the most vulnerable social groups coming from the former African colonies in the worst positions in postcolonial Portugal (Cardoso and Perista, “The forgotten city: poverty in marginal areas of Lisbon”; Almeida, *A Land Coloured Sea. Race, Politics and Identity Culture*; Batalha, *The Cape-Verdean*

Diaspora in Portugal. Colonial Subjects in a Postcolonial World; Bordonaro, “Guetto Six. Anthropology occupies the space”) and the corresponding nightlife segregation that led to the racialization of *African clubs*. However, this idealised discourse shapes the imagination of *kizomba* aficionados all over the world, and hence it succeeded in “imposing meanings and in imposing them as legitimate in disguising the relations of power which are at the root of its force” (Bourdieu and Passeron, *The reproduction*:18). Indeed, what I actually found during fieldwork was a general avoidance of nightclubs racialised as *African* by middle-class *White* consumers, who did not wish to experience postcolonial racial tensions in their leisure time. Had the postcolonial social dynamics been more balanced, harmonic and neutral, most middle-class people interested in the dancing culture would just learn through socialising in those clubs. In other words, the very existence of the *kizomba* industry is based on the social distances that turn the dance into a “hard-to-reach” experience for middle-class *White* consumers and hence a potential commodity. Second, it transforms the ethos of an informal and relaxed social dance into a standardised performance based on a hierarchy of defined levels (basic, medium, advanced, professional). In the context of this “meritocratic symbolism” (Wacquant 71), *African* dancing crowds alien to the industry are portrayed as having a “basic” level, and correspondingly their practices are deemed unworthy. In this way, a dance that had acquired the symbolic meaning of cultural resistance and collective pride in a hostile context of immigration turns into the symbolic means through which *African* inferiority is claimed once again.

As a result, members of *African club* nightlife societies of Lisbon (whether labelled as *Black* or *White*) do not recognise their cultures in the commodified performances displayed by (whether labelled *Black* or *White*) aficionados and teachers. It is important to note that in this process of misrepresentation, actors labelled *African* have played (and still play) a key role. Even though the first *kizomba* teachers (such as Carlos Vieira Dias alias Petchú, Zé Barbosa, Tomás Keita or Kwenda Lima) came from African countries (mainly Cape Verde, Angola and Guinea Bissau), they made a series of changes to the dance to make it understandable, teachable, acceptable and marketable (Jiménez, “From Angola to the World”, From the World to Lisbon and Paris: how structural inequalities shaped the global *kizomba* industry”). Unwittingly, they established the basis for a process of cultural appropriation, first by their students in Portugal, and later by aficionados all over the world. As *kizomba* spread along the global salsa circuits, dancers from Portuguese-speaking Africa living in European cities other than Lisbon entered into the scene. For example, Morenasso (from Angola) and Tony Pirata (from Cape Verde) in Paris, Eddy Vents (from Guinea Bissau) in London and Miami, José Rui (from Cape Verde) in Denmark, José N’dongala (from Angola) in Brussels or Dino Da Cruz (from Angola) in Amsterdam joined the global *kizomba* industry. In this way, new actors throughout Europe and the USA capitalised on their embodied dancing knowledge, sometimes contesting the practices of non-*African* labelled colleagues as unauthentic. Nevertheless, the goal of these new participants was not delegitimising the process of commodification or the global industry in itself but rather participating from a comparatively better position through a discourse of symbolic authenticity.

In the following lines, I attempt to disentangle the processes that have transformed a dance of cultural resistance into a dance for purchase, in order to analyse in more depth the specific logic that underpins this form of symbolic violence. These are well-known processes that other performances, packaged and sold as “Latin dances” such as ragtime, tango or salsa, have also undergone in order to become marketable (Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*; Goertzen and Azzi, “Globalization and the Tango”; Hutchinson, “Dancing in Place. An Introduction”; McMains, “‘Hot’ Latin Dance: Ethnic Identity and Stereotype”). The first necessary process is what Weber (1958) termed rationalisation. In order to make the dance understandable for people whose kinetic cultures were rather different, the first teachers introduced principles that were alien to the native practice, such as geometric concepts for moving on the floor (back, forth, right, left) and the practice of counting steps (one, two, one, two three). Thus, the dance also underwent simplification (cf. Hutchinson, “Dancing in Place. An Introduction”).

In the world of *African clubs*, the wide diversity of dance styles and social rules made providing a single description, valid for all cases, impossible. Nevertheless, for didactic reasons, the first teachers standardised the steps, and correspondingly reducing all this diversity into one and only one legitimate version (or, at least, one version per teacher). Moreover, the logic of “right” and “wrong,” which made no sense in those contexts, was necessarily introduced.

Another important aspect was the hygienization of the dance (cf. Hutchinson 2014). In the case of logic of movements regarded as overly sexual from the point of view of middle-class consumers, these had to be transformed to be acceptable and marketable. For example, *kizomba* proxemics have been a problem since the very first workshops. As students considered that partners danced too close according to their couple dance standards, they felt embarrassed and many therefore decided to quit. Therefore, teachers found a balanced distance between partners, wide enough to be acceptable but close enough to fulfil consumer expectations of an exotic “hot African culture.” This relates to the process of cultural stereotyping: Stereotyped representations of a “hot” and macho *African* culture (cf. McMains, “‘Hot’ Latin Dance: Ethnic Identity and Stereotype” for salsa) are disseminated through the global *kizomba* industry circuits in such a way that aficionados allow themselves to interact in a way they would never do outside of the dance floor. For example, women’s agency is generally reduced to a strict “follower” and passive attitude, something I hardly ever witnessed in *African discos*.

Variation proves another trait common to dance commodification processes (Robinson 2010). From this perspective, the common practice of “fusion” with other dance styles, appears as a “taylorist” intermixing of decontextualised elements (Robinson 2010). In the context of the global *kizomba* industry, these practices are depicted as evolutionary, which leads us to the most evident example of postcolonial symbolic violence: an evolutionist representation of the dance practices I could find among most aficionados in Spain and Portugal. According to this widespread discourse, *African* people have remained on the “basic step” and “it is thanks to us, European *kizomba* lovers, that the dance has evolved.” Instead of establishing the performances of people labelled *African* as an example to follow or an ideal to reach, they are represented as “too basic.” In this way, they create an emic hierarchy of value in which *kizombeiros* appear at the top. Interestingly, most of the teachers labelled *African* interviewed agree with this view. On the contrary, most members of *African club* night societies, irrespective of how they are labelled in ethnic terms, strongly disagree with this idea.

One important consequence of the aforementioned processes encapsulates how the dance has been depoliticised, detached from its original meaning (cf. Robinson 2010, Kabir 2018) through commodification. The connotations of cultural resistance that social dance had once acquired in *African clubs* of Lisbon, which constituted an essential ingredient of its ethos, were automatically erased. In this way, *kizomba* could be sold as a friendly, innocent and conflict-free exotic product. In other words, dance symbols were neutralised for the sake of the market.

“White People Dance Like Robots.” Practices of Cultural Resistance to Commodified *Kizomba* in *African* Nightclubs of Madrid and Lisbon.

When I started doing fieldwork in Madrid in 2012, *kizomba* aficionados followed a weekly ritual of night venues that included the following clubs: Ramdall on Tuesdays, La Sal on Wednesdays, But on Thursdays, Tropical House on Fridays and Bisú Lounge Club on Sundays. The most important day for this dancing community, mostly composed of middle-class men and women of Spanish nationality, proved Sunday night at Bisú Lounge Club, a venue organised by the event promotor Kevin and DJ Pappy’s, both from Guinea Bissau. The house used to be crowded and, unlike what happened during the rest of the week, the attendants involved people labelled *African*, who had no many options of houses playing music popular in Portuguese-speaking Africa in Madrid. Almost half of the audience was composed of immigrants from Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde in their twenties and thirties. Another important feature of this Bisú venue was the type of music played by the DJ, who included not only the genres most appreciated by aficionados (*kizomba* and *semba*) but also other styles popular among clients labelled *African* (*soukous*, *kompas*, and others).

Interestingly, the venue’s flyer depicted a black hand shaking a white hand symbolising peaceful interethnic relations. When looking at the dance floor, it looked like everybody chose dance partners irrespective of any ethnic labelling process to the extent that ethnicity had become irrelevant as a structuring principle in this specific venue.

The general ambience of relaxed conviviality gave the impression of a space in which African-ness played the role of a valuable symbol for all party-goers and did not structure the dance floor. Interestingly, it would change a few months afterwards. One of the strongest complaints among *kizombeiros* was the lack of venues for dancing on Saturday nights. The fact that they usually drank just water and juice during the night made it uninteresting for disco owners to invest in such a low consumption audience on weekends. Nevertheless, Kevin and DJ Pappy's succeeded in establishing a new reference for *kizomba* lovers in Madrid: Kizomba Paradise disco, a new *kizomba* venue for Fridays and Saturdays, a project they would run in a former salsa disco in the city centre. The community members I met were very excited about this good news. The inaugural party took place in August 2013 and was a great success. It seemed that a stable meeting point for the weekend gathering of Bisú's dancing society had finally been found.

Unfortunately, I could not immediately follow the development of this experiment as I had to move to Lisbon in September to officially start my postdoctoral fellowship. When I returned to Madrid for the Christmas holidays, I asked some *Spanish kizombeiros* about developments at the Kizomba Paradise club. Everyone I asked gave the same answer: "it's nice but you should come on Fridays because this is the only night you can dance. If you go on Saturdays, you will see that there are only African people who do not dance kizomba." As I was able to observe, the Bisú dancing community had split into two sections according to what appeared to be an ethnically structuring principle. I wondered whether I would encounter something similar in Lisbon. The different colonial pasts and contemporary migratory landscapes of the two cities would probably condition parallel nightlife stories around the idea of African-ness.

Once in Lisbon, I found it clearly differed from Madrid across at least two dimensions: the first arises from the greater number of nightclubs devoted to *African* music. This meant that it was impossible to reproduce the methodological strategy deployed in Madrid, where it was feasible to visit all the clubs and acquire a relatively good knowledge of a village-sized dancing community. In Lisbon, discos and parties around *African* music were so numerous that I had to make choices and focus on a rather reduced selection of the wide variety of clubs existing. The second difference relates to the structuring politics. Unlike the Bisú previous experience, in Lisbon, there was apparently a sharp distinction between two types of clubs and target audiences: *kizomba* venues for *Portuguese* dance aficionados and *African discos* for *African* people. In the beginning, it seemed that the split into two dancing communities that took place in Madrid after the opening of Kizomba Paradise already had a long tradition in Lisbon, indeed, as long as the history of *kizomba* commodification itself. Moreover, many clubs were oriented, but not limited, to a specific nationality, which differed from the Madrid case, where having the Portuguese language in common became relevant enough to create a sense of community. For this reason, the fieldwork strategy combined venues targeted at *kizomba* aficionados (Sabura on Tuesdays, Barrio Latino on Thursdays and River Parties or similar venues on Fridays) with those oriented to a specific national audience (the more *Angolan*-oriented Mwangolé on Mondays, the more *Cape Verdean*-oriented B.leza on Saturdays and the more *Guinean*-oriented Kora Club on Sundays). I combined these with sporadic visits to other houses to get a wider perspective, such as Ondeando club (oriented to the youth of diverse African nationalities), Futungo (*Angolan*-oriented), Sabura on Saturdays (oriented to *Cape Verdean* youth), The Dock's (focused on electronic dance music and targeted at youth of diverse nationalities) or Djumbai (*Guinean*-oriented), among others. However, the social dynamics of the night proved far more complex than following a simple structuring based on passport criteria.

One night in September 2014, before a *kizomba* concert, MC Gasolina (an artist from Angola) introduced the singer through trying to make an audience composed of mostly *African* people laugh and get into the party mood. He challenged the public by asking about their dancing skills: "I hope you are able to dance kizomba, otherwise you will have to go to the dance school. Do you know that kizomba dance schools do exist in the city? Do you know what you can learn there? One, two, three, one, two three, and again, do you think you can do that?" The audience broke out into laughter as he was touching upon a conventional source of mockery: the absurdity perceived in a formal teaching process applied to a social dance they used to learn rather informally. The most repeated trope during interviews and the informal conversation was: "White people dance like robots." This widespread discourse among party-goers labelled *African* consisting of mocking the *kizomba* dance school style reflected on the night structure by making them avoid

commodified dance floors. This phenomenon became even more apparent during the harshest years of the financial crisis when many *African* people living in Lisbon moved to other European countries, such as France or Germany, seeking jobs and better living conditions. Consequently, some clubs lost their clientele and had to close or reorient their marketing strategy towards the city's growing numbers of *kizomba* aficionados. In this context, some *African* party-goers faced the surprise of finding their clubs of reference with an unexpectedly different ambience. For example, once I witnessed the reaction of a man from Cape Verde who arrived in B.leza on Sunday night and found a *kizomba* party. Looking at the dance floor, he shook his head and said to the barman: “what is this circus?” before he finished his beer in one gulp and left. DJ Turbo, an experienced DJ from Angola, well-known in the so-called *African discos*, told this story in an interview:

They (African people) when they enter the disco and they find those schools, those things ... they turn back and go out, they say they cannot stand it [...] they hate it, they don't even want to hear about it [...]. They say it destroys the essence of the African ambience [...] because, for example, when they get there (to the disco), it has already happened to me in Kalema club where I was, once...I don't think it's bad...there is no problem in them going to schools, the problem is often the timetable. [...] When people arrive early and they find that thing, they turn back, they go out, they go somewhere else, ok, it's like this, in that register, one, two, one, two, one, two, and the people sitting looking at that thing, it's difficult to look at, isn't it? (laughter). (Interview with DJ Turbo, 22nd May 2015).

Nevertheless, this is not to draw a simple scenario of *White* people displaying the commodified *kizomba* world in festivals versus *Black* people dancing authentic *kizomba* in *African discos*. As seen in previous sections, actors that self-label themselves as *White* and *Portuguese* have constituted members of the *African club* societies of Lisbon since their earliest days. As such, many also dislike the process of *kizomba* commodification, laugh at dance school practices and refuse commodified environments. On the other hand, people that label themselves *Black* and *African* have taken part in the process of establishing a commodified *kizomba* scene from the very beginning of the phenomenon, acting as teachers, promoters, and event organisers. Correspondingly, the general conclusion in this respect is that commodification seems the strongest structuring principle of the night, even though ethnicity may appear as more salient from an external perspective.

“I Never Danced with an African Girl.” Postcolonial Conflicts and Gender on the Dance Floor.

Interestingly enough, the resistance to commodified dance floors seemed to have a gender. In Madrid, as I could observe and check in informal conversations, virtually every woman labelled *Spanish kizombero*³ used to dance with men labelled *African* and *Spanish*, but the opposite situation proved rather uncommon. Most *kizomba* aficionados reported that they had never danced with an *African* girl, and some of these men had never even considered the possibility of inviting them to dance. When asking them about the reasons for this situation, most informants talked about fear of breaking unknown cultural rules and they often compared this situation with their previous experience in fields of salsa discos and ambiances labelled *Latin American*. Among those who had invited these labelled *African* women to dance, most of them stated that they had been systematically rejected. In the following fieldwork diary excerpt, we may encounter several examples of these widespread discourses.

I ask Juan⁴ whether he has invited any African girls to dance, and he says that he has only very rarely done so. He says that he does not dare to invite them because they never come alone, they come in a group with men, and he ignores their social rules. “If you take a look, you will see that they never come alone, or in female groups, they always come in groups

³ *Kizombero* (male), and *kizombero* (female) are the names *kizomba* aficionados attribute themselves in the Madrid context.

⁴ I have changed the real names of research participants to pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The only persons who attributed their real names are reflected are those holding a public name and reputation in the scene, such as dance teachers, musicians, DJs, owners and club managers.

in which there are African men.” He tells me that ‘among Latin Americans, mostly from Central America if there is a group of boys and girls, even if it is composed of two boys and ten girls, they consider it a lack of respect someone coming from outside and inviting a girl in the group’. Then, he says, “I prefer being cautious because I don’t know if I am violating some rules if they will take it as an offence, or how they will take it, and so I prefer not to invite them.” [...] When leaving the disco with Ruben [...] he says goodbye to an African boy sitting by the door and says to him: “hey man, there’s no way to dance with girls from your country, they all refuse to dance with me, what’s going on?” He laughs and answers ‘after so many centuries of slavery, what do you want, man?’ They laugh. [...] It makes me remember that Daniel told me last Tuesday that he didn’t feel like inviting African girls to dance because “some of them have the queen attitude, like those Latinas that you find in salsa places and who look down on you as if you were some insect.” (Fieldwork diary, 19th April 2013)

In Lisbon, gender and ethnicity seemed to cross in a rather similar way. For example, in Barrio Latino, I could find the same pattern of *White kizomba* aficionadas dancing with *African* men who did not belong to the dance school world. As regards women labelled *African*, they were rather rarely present in *kizomba* venues in Lisbon. Unlike Madrid, they had many spaces to choose, and *kizomba* parties did not seem attractive places for them. When talking to male aficionados, it was hard to find anyone who had experience of dancing with those *African* women. The few individuals and groups of male *kizomba* aficionados that I could find who had the habit of visiting *African discos* and trying to invite female party-goers in those houses reported the same situation of rejection I described above for the case of Madrid. Nevertheless, this bitter feeling of rejection did not seem to be exclusive to men labelled *White*. Interestingly, whenever commenting with *African* male informants about these complaints, they expressed a solidarity discourse, blaming *African* women for what they considered a narcissistic attitude that harmed men irrespective of ethnic labels. In contrast with the implicit rule of accepting every invitation in order to practice dance steps that *kizomba* aficionadas displayed, this common practice of refusing male invitations to dance was so generalised that it had a particular emic category in the field: *tampa*. In the following fieldwork diary excerpt, there is a description of these *tampa* practices and the way they were perceived by one of my informants, Zé, a party-goer in his thirties born to a *Guinean* father and a *Cape Verdean* mother.

Zé tells me that he is going to search for girls to dance with. [...] He tells me that African girls often go out not for dancing but for exhibiting themselves and getting many *tampas*. According to him, they do it on purpose. “They make themselves extremely beautiful, they choose a place in which they can be easily seen, and they wait for men to come just to say ‘no’, shaking their heads energetically in contempt, without even opening their mouths to say ‘no, thank you.’” He says that they spend the whole night like this and they compete among themselves to get the highest number of *tampas*, but they don’t dance. Zé goes to invite a girl who is sitting on a chair, but she says no. He explains to me: “I got a *tampa*.” He tries again with another girl. When he is on his fourth *tampa*, he comes back and says to me “this is because they don’t know me here, they won’t dance with you if they don’t know you” (Fieldwork diary, 21st October 2013).

However, *kizomba* aficionados still generally perceived that their whiteness played an important role in the refusal of *African* females to dance with them. In summary, a common feature of Madrid and Lisbon *African* dance floors emerged out of the apparent ethnic structuring of the night based on a gendered avoidance of the commodified spaces and actors.

Even though this gendered issue deserves in-depth research that goes beyond the purposes of this article and the scope of this project, I can at least propose a line of interpretation coherent with the main statements thus far made. Taking into account how *kizomba* is a couple dance in which the male partner is supposed to lead, and the female partner is supposed to follow, we may conclude that a male aficionado is able to impose the aforementioned symbolic violence while a female aficionada would just have to adapt to the non-commodified kinetic discourse. Consequently, a couple composed of an *African* man and a *European* woman produces a symbolic inversion of the power relations prevalent in general society. From this perspective, the attraction that many *African* male party-goers feel towards dancing with *White* aficionadas and the repulse of *African* women towards dancing with *White* aficionados makes sense in a political dimension as a form of resistance. In this way, the collective agency of social actors that embody African-ness in their daily lives experiences a subconscious way of rejecting cultural dominance in their regular night lives. In other words, the imbalance of power relations between gendered subjects implicit in the logic of social couple dance is inverted symbolically by party-goers labelled *African* to represent resistance to a postcolonial imbalance of power relations between racialised subjects.

I would like to conclude with a self-critique of the methodological problems underlying this research. Throughout this text, the reader is probably missing the voices of a specific kind of social actor which is often referred to but not in the first person: women labelled *African*. In spite of this essential shortcoming, reflexive analysis may lead us to return a constructive outcome. My position in the field was interpreted as that of a *White kizomba* aficionada and, therefore, it was hard to coincide in any socialisation process with these women during the night. In general terms, in Madrid and in Lisbon, the only girls labelled *White* who socialised with those labelled *Black* were those belonging to their group of friends or relatives who were alien to the commodified *kizomba* world. In other words, the methodological problem does not lie so much in the researcher's gender and skin but rather in the strategy of accessing the field through *kizomba* schools. In the end, this serves to reinforce the view of the positioning of the *kizomba* industry as the main structuring principle in this field. In terms of the power structures that rule the night, my materials represent a clear result of the underrepresentation of women in roles whether as club owners, managers or as independent dance teachers. In any case, this constitutes a rather important methodological limitation, and therefore the conclusions of this research must be interpreted by taking this imbalance of voices into account. Hopefully, future fieldwork will offset this shortcoming, and we will obtain a more complete polyphony to grasp this problem better.

Conclusions: on the Symbolic Power of Global Markets

Throughout this article, I have explored several ways of cultural resistance developed by the nightclub societies that gather at spaces labelled *African discos* in Lisbon, taking Madrid as a contrasting example. Since the seventies, these spaces became shelters where people who felt identified with or attracted by Portuguese-speaking Africa could find cultural comfort from the hostile world outside and develop their own music and dance cultures. Since the late nineties, certain traits of this culture were commodified, and people belonging to *African nightclub* societies generally choose between two options. A few individuals capitalise on their dancing skills and turn into *kizomba* dance teachers or promoters, thus making "individual efforts to assimilate that only reiterate the dominant values" (Schwarz, "The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity As a Form of Symbolic Violence: the Case of Middle-Class Ethnic Minorities:6-7). In the meanwhile, most party-goers show open resistance through making fun of commodified *kizomba* style, avoiding commodified *kizomba* places and/or refusing to dance with "congress style"⁵ aficionados. In other words, they adopt a strategy of maintaining "loyalty to the self and the group" (Schwarz, "The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity As a Form of Symbolic Violence: the Case of Middle-Class Ethnic Minorities":7), condemning as ridiculous the dancing culture of the commodified world and portraying it as dancing "white" (cf. Fordham and Ogbu, "Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'"). The metaphor of the "white dancing robot" proved revealing in this sense.

Nevertheless, these practices of othering should not lead us to conclude that the field is ethnically structured. As we have seen so far, certain people labelled *African* have participated actively in the constitution of the commodified *kizomba* world, and certain people labelled *Portuguese* belong to nightclubs societies that resist this movement. When we look deeper into it, we find that the position in the global *kizomba* industry actually proves the main structuring principle of the night so that African-ness is constructed in multiple and contradictory ways.

Finally, the global industry proves relevant in the last dimension. When Bourdieu elaborated his theory of symbolic power, he pointed at the state as the agent who exercises the monopoly over symbolic violence (Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power"). However, in late modernity, transnational markets have often come to play this role, imposing their discourses at the global level, and correspondingly increasing their "performative power of designation." (Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power": 23) In this context, many social groups self-commodify making of ethnicity a tool for attracting capital in the global economy (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*). In the case exposed

⁵ By using this category, I follow the term "congress style salsa" proposed by McMains ("'Hot' Latin Dance: Ethnic Identity and Stereotype":490).

here, the agents of the global dance industry, i.e., teachers, promoters, festival organisers, DJs, dance school managers, nightclub owners make their profit through projecting an attractive idea of African-ness that hides the conflictual aspects and structural inequalities that cross the postcolonial societies in which *kizomba* actually developed. For this reason, in this article, I proposed considering *kizomba* commodification as a form of symbolic violence.

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