

Paquete digital as media format for cultural consumption in Cuba: Theoretical and investigative paths in ethnographic-inspired research

Paquete digital como formato mediático para el consumo cultural en Cuba: Caminos teóricos e investigativos en la investigación de inspiración etnográfica

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Abstract

The article discusses the media consumption related to pop music among young Cubans based on ethnographic-inspired field research, conducted between 2017 and 2019 in Havana, which questions the dictates of youth studies in Latin America. Highlights the legitimization of a particular format of media, the *paquete digital* (“digital package”: a set of downloaded and shared files) that focuses on the debate over Internet access in Cuba, political and ideological disputes regarding the economic embargo imposed on the country and the Cuban State’s attempts to dialogue with youth. The relevance of the study lies in debating cosmopolitanism and cultural consumption in a particular economic and political context, postulating a different way of constructing ideals of modernity.

Keywords: pop music, media consumption, paquetes digitales, youth studies, cosmopolitanism.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el consumo de medios relacionado con la música pop entre los jóvenes cubanos a partir de una investigación de campo de inspiración etnográfica, realizada entre 2017 y 2019 en la ciudad de La Habana, que problematiza las prescripciones sobre los estudios de la juventud en América Latina. Destaca la consagración de un formato particular de medios, el “paquete digital” (conjunto de archivos descargados y compartidos) que se centra en el debate sobre el acceso a Internet en Cuba, las disputas políticas e ideológicas sobre el embargo económico impuesto al país y los intentos de diálogo del Estado cubano con la juventud. La relevancia del estudio radica en debatir el cosmopolitismo en contextos económicos y políticos particulares que destacan diferentes formas de construir los ideales de la modernidad.

Palabras clave: música pop, consumo de medios, paquetes digitales, estudios juveniles, cosmopolitanismo.

Introduction

What does it mean to be a cosmopolitan youth in the context of the socialist island of Cuba? During the two years spent on the investigation *Pop Music in Cuba: Media and Political Confrontations*,¹ which debated the dynamics of the consumption of pop culture attractions on the island of Cuba, it sought to understand the practices of youth and fans of pop music products in a context of unequal levels of internet access and the curtailment of these products by economic conditions and political issues stemming from the tense geopolitical

relationship between Cuba and the United States since the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Because of these restrictive conditions, practices linked to the piracy of products and digital networks emerged, indicating a distinctive cultural consumption on the socialist island that demonstrates the asymmetries of the processes of territorializations of global phenomena in unequal forms of power (Massey, 1991). *Paquetes digitales*, sets of files downloaded from the internet and spread widely throughout Cuba, are the results of the Cuban citizens’ need for connection with pop culture.

This article presents the results of this study and the theoretical and methodological discussions indicated by the data collection (in two fieldwork visits for interviews and participant observations of pop music fans and owners of businesses related to internet consumption in the city of Havana, carried out in 2017 and 2019; bibliographic research and data collection from journals and social networking sites).

The central objective of this article is to discuss aspects of media consumption (Toaldo and Jacks, 2013) linked to music among Cuban youth in the unique context of the island of Cuba (the only socialist nation in Latin America), from the material and symbolic nomadism, ways of experiencing cosmopolitanism, new understandings engendered in and by technicities (Martín Barbero, 2017), and the role of musical media practices (Pereira, 2017) and their political meanings. Musical media practices are understood as activities, tastes, and uses connected to music, involving producers, distributors, listeners, and fans, as well as the practices of downloading, sharing, listening to songs, going to concerts, etc. In this wide range of activities covering the communicational circuit of music, we can begin to perceive political meanings –not only in their traditional or institutional sense–, but articulated by the affects, embodiments, aestheticizations, and the construction of forms of sociability and youth identities (Reguillo, 2017; Rocha, 2012).

Thus, the musical and media practices are shown to be important elements for thinking about Cuban youth, the ways they construct and express their identities, and the ways they relate to the media and consume formats and content, experiencing different meanings of cosmopolitanism. A broad idea of politics emerges in what Cerbino and Rodríguez (2005) and Rocha (2009) term “politicalness”: the practices and imaginings of groups of Latin American youths in which the body (showing their markings of social class, race, gender, and territoriality) is the definer and delineator of specific behaviors, characterizing an exercise of subjectivities and a profound interaction of the strategic practices of connection and participation with daily life. It must be taken into account, then, that the youth construct and transform the meanings of politics in their identities, bodies, socializing, and ways of using public spaces, in a notion that underscores the politicization of daily life.

The idea of politicalness aids in the understanding of the uniqueness with which daily actions linked to the performativity of fans takes a unique shape on the island of Cuba. The banal act of wearing a shirt with a pop artist like Madonna, Beyoncé, or one of the classic rock groups like AC/DC or Creedence Clearwater Revival can generate judgements in private (family) or public (friend groups) spheres surrounding ideas of adherence and loyalty to the socialist regime on the island.² It deals with a cultural residue of rejecting anglophone cultural production, especially in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when cultural politics in Cuba entailed an ideological distancing from the cultural production of the United States (Lima and Soares, 2017).

This view of politicalness helps us see that music and media cultures can be understood as places of tension and ambiguities that highlight cracks in the ideological discourse about what “must be so” for Cuban youth. The meanings of the political are widened and unpacked to include what is said regarding affects and embodiments. In this sense, musical genres like pop and reggaeton, for example, can serve to challenge prescribed identities and outline new and negotiated meanings of what it is to “be Cuban” for many youths.

The article begins with a theoretical-conceptual discussion that involves understanding young people: perspectives of analysis, the issue of new understandings, temporalities, nomadisms, palimpsests, and hypertexts of identity and affects (Martín Barbero, 2017; Urteaga Pozo, 2012; Reguillo, 2017; Feixa, 2014). After that, we introduce aspects of the research that anchor this article about pop music in Cuba, highlighting the tensions of media and digital consumption on the island and in the practices, imaginations, and identities of the youth. Finally, we discuss these aspects of the study with the question of cosmopolitanism and its forms of experimentation and construction in youth cultures.

Youths, technicities, new understandings

Ibero Latin American social sciences laid a foundation for the discussions about youths and youth cultures (Cubides, 1998; Feixa, 1998, 2003, 2014; Reguillo, 2000, 2017; Borelli *et al.*, 2009; Garcia Canclini *et al.*, 2012; Martín Barbero, 2017), highlighting a debate about the youths (plural), their ambiguities, social and cultural constructs, symbolic meanings, promises, and threats, potentials and weaknesses. What Feixa (1998) calls “youth

cultures” are the ways that the social experiences of the youths are collectively expressed through the construction of distinct lifestyles, fundamentally based on free time or in spaces intersected with institutional life, having to be seen in the plural with different configurations and heterogeneity in diverse times and spaces. The concept reframes the view of youth, transferring the emphasis from marginality to identity; from appearances to strategies; from the spectacular to daily life; from delinquency to idleness; from images to the actors.

Some of the reflections about the youths that we dialogue with focus on an idea that takes into account the fluid and permeable character of youth social groups, emphasizing the diversity and plurality of social experiences. One of the routes that emerges in these studies views youths as named objects with diffused boundaries, as Martín Barbero (2017) describes. One of the perspectives of analysis in which it is possible to identify this viewpoint is in relation to youths as a territory, always in flux and facing fluctuations. Being nomadic, in this sense, would mean the transit of youths through cities, visualities, and sounds, inserted in a reality and in a complex daily experience, without fixed locations, which allows them to move about various environments both concrete and digital, fostering what Martín-Barbero called “cultural disordering”, something related to the development of new understandings of time, space, and technologies. All of this is articulated by the idea of “technicity”, a Barberian concept that implies the uses, the forms of appropriation of the techniques, and the ways that they are internalized.

The multisensory fluxes develop nomadic understandings, composing new narratives of the world, ways of sensing, looking-listening to life, many times more fragmented, outlining an idea of *zapping*, which not only refers to technology but also “to zap” through the city, among the various media and the diverse forms of information. Borelli (2009) focuses on the ways that youths live and be in the city, including the narratives of self and others, the experience of visibility and sonority, the ways of forming groups, the perception of violence, consumption practices, the different aesthetic-cultural expressions, the choices of the production and appropriation of digital cultures, with an emphasis on the articulation between culture and politics/political nature of cultural actions.

From the methodological point of view, the need to look at the youths’ familial, school, and work relationships is apparent. It is necessary to pay close attention to the so-called “minor”, dimensions in investigations of youths, i. e.: the forms of leisure, cheap ways of getting around the city, and technology consumption with special attention to the disputes about engaging in forms of non-traditional political participation that has strong components of action and performativity in its consumption, entertainment, and corporalities.

As Urteaga Pozo (2012) suggests, to think about youths in contemporaneity is to question them as a given set of categorical answers to the consequences of globalization and new cultural and sociocommunicative mediations. The analysis of the forms of media consumption of Cuban youths in this article appears as a privileged place to consider these answers, which include social, cultural, economic, and historical meanings of that country, but that are presented in the form of hypertexts with diffused, accumulated, and blurry connections that disorient and disorganize (in multiple senses of the word) the current broader questions.

Understanding the imaginings transmuted by the global configurations of culture, Appadurai (2004) guides us to look at the connected and collective actions of the youths and their ways of feeling and acting in the world. It addresses new worldwide forms of constructing social and affective meanings of life and the world and their aspects of cosmopolitanism that interconnect the local and the global, being constructed as ways of existing in the world, in which the (re)appropriations of media products, networks, and technologies play an important role.

Media consumption in *paquetes digitales* practices

The consumption practices of pop music fans in Cuba elevate the media format called *paquetes digitales*, a time-demarcated “packet” of digital files that are downloaded and shared through archivable media (USB drives and hard drives) in a type of distribution that involves a network of spontaneously organized online and offline services. These appeared due to the urgent need to consume information and were assimilated into the “black market” without the knowledge of the State (Argüelles *et al.* 2019). The *paquetes digitales* are a kind of “media MacGyvering” (Zanforlin and Soares, 2018), alternative and improvised forms of

consuming media that emerges in adverse or restrictive contexts and indicates the need for connection by who use them.

Throughout the study, different levels of understanding the dynamics of the *paquetes digitales* were postulated, insofar as all the studied phenomena brought up the format as a typology of access to international television series, video clips, pop music albums, blockbuster films, and *telenovelas*, among others. At the beginning of the investigation (Soares, 2016a), starting with the relation of a Cuban drag queen who is a fan of the singer Lady Gaga to the context of Havana's gay scene and the gender dynamics present in the Sexuality and Gender Policy of the Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (National Center for Sexual Education –Cenesex–), the *paquetes digitales* brought the drag queen in question and the anglophile pop music fans in Cuba as well as DJs at clubs and show houses into contact with North American and Latin music that has been successful around the world. Albums, video clips, and live performances, not just of Lady Gaga but also of other pop music artists, are offered and accessed through the *paquetes digitales*.

In a second investigation (Lima and Soares, 2018), it was noticed that there was a rejection of the *paquetes* among some pop music fans. Through three in-depth interviews with the foremost Madonna fan on the island, who is also responsible for the Facebook page Madonna Cuba, it was suggested that the generational aspect modulates the consumer relations of the *paquetes*. Though for the young Cuban fans of Lady Gaga, aged 15 to 22 years old, there is no mention or criticism of the quality of the available material, in the case of Madonna fans (older, in the age range of 30 to 40 years old), the *paquetes* were rejected because of the low definition of some files (especially video files) and by the fact that songs are not in the same sequential order as they appear on the albums, but instead are collections based on the artists' successes: single files that were not in the order that the artist had decided. The quality of the *paquetes* is an element of distinction among the *paqueteiros* and in the process of loyalty to them. This was further confirmed upon investigating the consumption of series and blockbuster films in the Cuban context (Soares, 2016b), forming recommendation networks that create significant differentiations both among the *paqueteiros* and among those who take the *paquetes* door-to-door.

The *paquetes digitales* do not only service the consumption and circulation of North American products or products that have had broad success in pop culture. Reggaeton, a highly controversial musical genre in the Cuban context due to its glorification of consumption, luxury cars, women, and a lifestyle with capitalist values, has also become central to the success of the *paquetes*. One episode involving the censorship of a reggaeton video clip by the Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión (Cuban Institute of Radio and Television –ICRT–) on public television in Cuba and its wide circulation in the *paquetes* (Pereira and Soares, 2017) demonstrate that the non-canonical latino collection that lies outside the parameters enshrined by the State and which also presents circulation difficulties in the official media systems has gained an important place in the dissemination of the *paquetes*.

Even when artists play shows in Cuba (as in the case of the shows that celebrated the return of relations between Cuba and the United States and the visit of, then, president Barack Obama to the socialist island in 2016, with shows by the electronic music trio Major Lazer and the rock band the Rolling Stones), producers still need to make the artist's albums and songs available on *paquetes digitales*, with the goal of popularizing the artists among young people. This is highlighted in the article about the popularization of the group Major Lazer at their show in March 2016 at the Tribuna Antiimperialista José Martí, in Havana, in front of the, then, recently opened Embassy of the United States (Soares, 2016c).

From this set of postulations about the dynamics of the *paquetes digitales*, the premise emerges that in the face of a State-supported media system, young Cubans experience restrictions to international pop culture products by developing alternative methods of media consumption. The *paquetes* –sets of files downloaded from the Internet and sold through *oficinas digitales* in Havana and distributed throughout the island– represent the main device for two types of media confrontations: 1) In the face of Cuban television programming, with its focus on entertainment (accented by the *telenovela*), sports, and educational offerings, in spite of having experienced great success on the island, it does not offer media programming primarily aimed at youth, like Japanese, Korean, and North American series are, for example; 2) because of the restrictions placed on internet use by the

State, paralyzing citizens' right to download and watch series, films, video clips, and songs that are not shown on Cuba's main media outlets.

From this perspective, the consumption includes the structures involved in the practices of production and reception of materialities and imaginings in which products, symbols, and brands are seen in their cultural and symbolic dimension –helping to create distinctions and classification systems, lifestyles and identities, and working as a vector of forms of citizenship– (McCracken, 2003; Garcia Canclini, 2004; Douglas and Isherwood 2004; Rocha and Pereira, 2009). Garcia Canclini (2004), extrapolating from the idea of need and instrumentality of goods, developed an important conception surrounding the cultural consumption that can be understood as being linked to the processes of appropriation and product uses, but in which the symbolic value prevails over the values of use/exchange. From this idea of cultural consumption, Toaldo and Jacks (2013) emphasize the media consumption articulated by the use and appropriation of the media cultural production: through mass media like television, radio, newspaper, magazine, internet, websites, blogs, cellphones, tablets, or products/content offered through these means like telenovelas, films, news, series, music, video clips, information, entertainment, etc.

This idea of media consumption guides us in the way that we think about its uses and appropriations, like with the commercial and institutional frameworks of the *paquetes digitales* in Cuba. We seek to understand not only the prescriptive nature of consumption (through supports or methods, products/content like the ways through which they are utilized in daily life, places, ways, routines), but especially to stress how this format indicates particular modes of media consumption by the Cuban youths in their symbolic relations with the world.

The *paquetes digitales* point towards the investigation of the material dimensions of internet consumption on the socialist island as well as the sociohistorical dynamics that imply the uniqueness of this sphere of digital communication. We will now discuss Internet access in Cuba and the conditions of production and circulation of the *paquetes*, and we will describe the fieldwork that investigated the production dimension as well as

the networks that engender the communicational practices.

Internet piracy and digital culture

The restricted access to the Internet in Cuba includes a dispute of narratives about the relations between the State, citizens, and the global geopolitics that are already part of widely disseminated scripts and myths about daily life on the socialist island. The low level of Internet access is described by a large part of the media that inevitably covers the situation on the island as a form of curtailing the population's liberty, emphasizing a certain negligence on behalf of the Cuban State in testing such benefits since it puts the support of the Cuban Revolution project at risk. On the other hand, media institutions linked to the Cuban government, besides the alternative media, place the Internet restrictions more as a component of the economic embargo imposed by the United States, which prevents companies around the world from linking connections to the island via fiber optics or satellite.³ We emphasize that all analyses of consumption and media in the Cuban context is through a series of imprecise data, resulting in political and symbolic disputes about the governability of the country.

To investigate the *paquetes digitales*, it is necessary to understand the conditions of production and consumption of these devices. In this study, 16 places of sale for *paquetes digitales* in the city of Havana were visited, separated by neighborhood: six in Vedado, four in Havana Vieja, four in Miramar/Playa, and two in Centro Havana. In all of them, the researcher was introduced through a mediator and asked questions to the owners or employees tasked with managing the locations, with the purpose of trying to clarify the procedures to download the files on the *paquetes* since the Internet on the entire island of Cuba appears unstable and expensive, making the ability to download digital files even harder. It was noticeable that all of the interviewees felt uncomfortable talking about this subject.⁴

Since 2001, Cuban technology fans have set up offline networks that span across Havana. Through the combination of antennas and cables hidden in houses and buildings, these networks connect around 9 000 computers only in the Cuban capital, resulting in networks called *Snet* ("streetnet"). Reports on tech sites dated from 2015 detail material considerations (reach, devices used, ways

to acquire products).⁵ The main reason for the construction of this network is the exchange of information, file sharing (especially the files in the paquetes) and playing games like *World of Warcraft* or *Call of Duty* –both are extremely popular on the socialist island–. There are behavior and etiquette rules on the Snet: pornography is definitively prohibited, as is spreading antigovernment political content.

In 2017, *Wired* magazine presented a description of the networks, and it also detailed a mapping of the main Internet hubs in the city of Havana, based on accounts from consumers and owners of places where the paquetes are sold, demonstrating the connections between Cuban migrants who live in Miami and supply technology devices, and contact networks among citizens and institutions with broad access to the Internet in Cuba (universities, hospitals, hotel chains, etc.) for pirating networks.⁶

There are two types of connections available as a response to the Internet restrictions in Cuba: 1) setting up online networks by pirating networks offered by the Cuban State as well as the availability of antennas that connect to satellites that provide Internet access outside of the State's control; and 2) faced with Internet restrictions, the main resource developed in Cuba was the creation of offline networks with varying degrees of reach and connection between computers providing content sharing, especially as regards the paquetes digitales (Celecia Pérez, 2020).

Parallel to the formation of these networks, since 2015, there has been public wi-fi access across the island of Cuba. Since 2016, with the significant increase in the number of cell phones on the island, another system of mobile networks has become extremely popular among young Cubans for sharing entertainment content: Bluetooth.⁷ Due to the high connection costs, it is through offline systems that Cubans share their main entertainment content. It is, however, through offline networks like Snet and also via Bluetooth connection that the information and content that make up the paquetes is spread.

The two paqueteros that agreed to be interviewed and explain how their businesses work had high-speed connections coming from shared Internet that came from individuals who were part of the groups with privileged access to the internet on the island. One of them showed us a 200-meter cable

that connects to the residence of an individual who has residential Internet access.

The collection of videos, songs, photos, and text files is compiled by the paqueteros and circulated around the island person-to-person, spreading rapidly from Havana to more distant places in under a week, “making up what is known in tech lingo as a *sneakernet*: a network that transmits data via the soles of shoes, buses, horses, or any other kind of content transportation” (García Martínez, 2017, p .1). According to the author, around 3 million Cubans access content via the paquetes.

There is two-pronged debate in Cuba about the deliberate inaction of government sectors regarding the digital practices of the country's youths. The first, naturally, is the thesis that Internet access is limited on the island, mainly because of the economic embargo by the United States, whose restrictions make purchasing equipment practically impossible. Thus, Cuban youths continue to “feel the squeeze” of the embargo in their cultural enjoyment and entertainment, when they don't have access to the Internet. The second is that insofar as the youth's digital practices continue without political motives, Internet access assuages their desires to emigrate off the island. Allowing these practices to continue without violating broader norms of media regulation in the country is a way of creating a favorable environment so that Cuban youth can identify with the socialist government. It is necessary to point out that, in fact, the question of Internet access in Cuba has been met with difficulties, especially political difficulties, in its expansion. Since the main companies connected to digital culture sectors are American, e.g. Facebook and Google, there are political obstacles to building digital environments on the island.

Whether it comes from an imprudent program from the American agency of international cooperation, USAid, that seeks to weaken Fidel Castro's regime through the ZunZuneo service –a kind of “Cuban Twitter” that uses counterrevolutionary text messages– or through a wider-ranging perception of social media as a tool of dissidents, the Cuban authorities have traditionally been cautious in relation to the internet. (Grant, 2017, p. 1)

In 2017, Google reached an agreement with Etecsa to store online content from sites like YouTube and Gmail on servers located in Cuba to improve local access. However, there is still a distrust of unrestricted internet access from Cuban authori-

ties towards both American companies and Cuban citizens.

The incorporation of advertising content in the paquetes is the clearest connection between the paqueteros in Havana and digital content agencies located in Miami (United States), the largest Cuban community outside of the socialist island, a large part of whom have family and connections with people still living in Cuba. According to innumerable paqueteros, there are clients interested both in the attractiveness of the paquetes (“telenovelas”, films, series) and in the classified ad listings to sell or exchange products: something that isn’t published in traditional Cuban media. One of the most famous types of advertising content available in the paquetes is Revolico,⁸ a Cuban version of Craigslist,⁹ a site with classifieds to sell or trade different types of goods and services: cars, jobs, clothes, animals, electronics, etc.

The concept of having counterrevolutionary content created in Miami generated even greater distrust of the paquetes in the Cuban government. Besides being “out of control” and promoting “American culture,” the “artistic” and “intellectual” level of the content in the paquetes is frequently attacked as being “low”, because they are filled with American blockbusters and Mexican “telenovelas”. There is not consensus on the legality of selling individual paquetes, but accounts of youths being imprisoned for selling paquetes are constantly reported. Cuban authorities tried to create a direct rival for the paquetes called *maletín* or *mochila* (briefcase or backpack). Instead of blockbusters, they contain classic films, traditional music, and educational material.

Conclusions

In researching forms of pop music/culture consumption in Cuba, we found forms of experiencing interculturality and cosmopolitanism (Hannerz, 1999; Delanty, 2008), in which the zones of contact, conflict, and negotiation of cultural and identity meanings are present. It emerges on a cosmopolitan, transnational, or global scale of spaces (Hannerz, 1997, 1999), and considers new forms of communications and global financial operations that create deterritorializations and reterritorializations (Haesbaert, 2011), affecting the perception of space and time, and bringing theoretical and methodological expression to a cosmopolitan perspective (Beck, 2007; Appadurai, 2004). Hannerz (1997) argues the use of the vocabulary of

interconnectivity and methodological cosmopolitanism, refuting the notion of mosaic or juxtaposition, since we experience different levels of not just geographic mobility, but especially media mobility, creating flows that unfold in time and space.

The notion of cosmopolitanism present in these processes is not restricted to just the integrations and interactions with the Global North, but rather it recognizes the existence of a multiplicity of cosmopolitan projects in the world (Delanty, 2008). In the analyzed context, we notice changes in youth identity constructions in Cuba, articulating new senses of being Cuban, Latino, and Caribbean, just like the identity aspects linked to the music that emerges from these hegemonic constructions (for example, the way that many Cuban youths reject salsa and Cuban *son*, articulated with meanings of “nation” and “revolution” that are seen as archaic).

Critical cosmopolitanism would point to a place of analysis that is located between or in the mediations between local and global (Delanty, 2008). In the analyzed Cuban context, traces of this cosmopolitanism are shown that presuppose the mixture and the re-elaboration of cultures and identities, where music and entertainment play an important role, collaborating for an alternative understanding of the normal idea of globalization as homogenization and standardization (even though this maintains its ties), regarding the way the local responds to the challenges posed by the global.

In the consumption of the paquetes digitales, we see an elaboration of belongings in which songs, video clips, series, etc., serve as “expert systems” (Serrano Amaya, 2004) to articulate, construct, and elaborate meanings of self identity, in the individual and collective, media and performative actions of aspects of what it means to be young in the Cuban context. The idea of “expert systems” calls to debate modes of knowledge that extend to the social relations and intimacy, which they draw on to realize a reflective experience of the self and others in which media plays an important role. These transformations involve, among other aspects, an intrinsic relation between the financial/economic/political globalization trends and events located in the subjective and daily life, a construction of the self as a reflection project (Giddens, 1999), an elementary part of the reflectiveness of modernity.

DeNora (2000) moves this discussion forward by bringing music (but we can also think of other media products) as a possibility to understand the subjectivities as “technology of self,” or in other words, as an element that leverages the individuals to express and construct affects and meanings of self identity in which the youths act as aesthetic agents in the social life in current urban, cosmopolitan contexts.

In this delineated liminal space of youth, the subjectivities linked to the communicative technicalities must be carefully analyzed, because they carry important aspects that reflect the complex articulation between consumption practices, collective tastes, and social conditions, which are present in the practices of clothing choices, dressing up, gathering together to listen to and share songs on the street, building “hermeneutic communities of interpretation” (Martín Barbero, 2017) that correspond to new ways of perceiving and narrating the identities and the respective forms of attributing meaning to the world, to the Nation, and to being young.

In this range of discussions, we must add the need to think about Cuban and Latin American youth from a decolonial perspective (Mignolo, 2008) that does not deny the influences from the North, but seeks out an interpretation of the practices that have occurred in our latitudes on their own terms. We seek to escape from adult-centric, enlightenment paradigms as well as those that see the rebel subculture, *stricto sensu*, as the only or the most legitimate means of possible political expression in adolescent groups. We, indeed, stress the cosmopolitanisms in a critical perspective, which negotiate local/global rationales and create new global meanings of place (Massey, 1991), turning pop music into a place of political tension (Soares, 2015) that passes through bodies, emotions, and musical tastes.

Notes

¹ The research project Pop Music in Cuba: Media and Political Confrontations was funded by the grant CNPq/MCTI 20/2015: Humanities, Social and Applied Social Sciences of the Brazilian Government, and resulted in field research in the city of Havana between 2017 and 2019, to discuss anglophile pop music consumption by Cuban youth. We adopted an ethnographic-inspired methodology to trace the consumption itineraries of pop music fans on the socialist island: their practices and performances from different social markers, highlighting the

issue of gender, above all by recognizing that the cultural consumption of pop music is an important symbolic articulator for LGBTQIA+ citizens in the Cuban context. We employed the techniques of in-depth interviews and following online and offline consumption practices to complete this work.

- ² For a report by the Cuban writer Leonardo Padura about the Cuban State opening up to the consumption of rock and pop music: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/colunas/leonardopadura/2015/10/1697721-rolling-stones-de-olho-em-havana.shtml?origin=folha>
- ³ “The Cuban government has been trying to improve the situation [of Internet access] by forming partnerships with countries like Venezuela, which connected a fiber optic cable to the island; Russia, which connected 3G signals to its satellites; and China. Recently, Google has also been trying to get around the embargo, signing agreements with Cuba to install servers on the island.” To access the full article: <https://www.causaoperaria.org.br/mesmo-sob-bloqueio-cuba-amplia-acesso-a-internet/>.
- ⁴ Two paqueteros, under condition of anonymity, decided to share how they accessed high speed internet in the city of Havana by grifting the public Internet access system that is regulated by the Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba (Etecsa). The report in this article mixes the stories of these two paqueteros with data from reports about internet access in the country.
- ⁵ For more information: <https://www.tecmundo.com.br/internet/73281-rede-ilegal-internet-conseguiu-sobreviver-cuba.htm>.
- ⁶ For the full article: <https://www.wired.com/2017/07/inside-cubas-diy-internet-revolution/>
- ⁷ To understand how this activity works: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2013/03/1239270-as-tramas-da-rede-cubana-como-funciona-a-internet-off-line-na-ilha.shtml>.
- ⁸ To access this site: <https://www.revologico.com/>.
- ⁹ Craigslist is a network of online communities that publishes free announcements of various types to the users, from job offers to erotic content. The service was founded in 1995 by Craig Newmark, in San Francisco, California, and has expanded to more than 450 cities around the globe.

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