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Social Sustainability and Collective Participation

Cyclical Dynamics of the Multipart Singing in the Village of Manhouce

Maria do Rosário Pestana

This study discusses multipart singing in the central-northern Portuguese village of Manhouce in order to understand why and how local societies produce, safeguard and disclose common memories, cultural traditions, and musical performances. In 1938, during the dictatorial regime of the Estado Novo, the village of Manhouce was the target of a process of cultural objectification (Handler 1988), with the aims of both creating an image of “being Portuguese” and making the Portuguese exercise an ideological practice capable of “defending the prevailing order” (Paulo 1994:5). The competition provided external recognition of the supposed “authenticity” and “antiquity” of Manhouce traditions which continues to be a source of pride today. Since then, local activists have in cyclically periods brought collective performances of multipart singing into the public space. I argue that in the 21st century, it is through this collective memory, and the repertoire and performance of rural musical traditions that local activists and residents of Manhouce fight for the sustainability of their society, for the public space, for the relational space for meeting face-to-face, countering the fragmentation of their individual lives and the peripheralisation of the village. In the 21st century, through multipart singing, women actively create a powerful network that is central to the sustainability of the local social life.

Keywords: Collective Performances, Cultural objectification, Cyclical Practice, Heritage, Multipart Singing, Portugal, Sustainability.

It is 9 PM on the 11th of August. There is great excitement on the main street of the village of Manhouce. Today, the 3rd Semana Cultural de Manhouce (Cultural week of Manhouce) comes to a close with the performance of Cantos e Encantos (Chants and Enchantments). Between cars searching for a place to park, a bus that spills out its passengers, visitors that the council kindly brought from the natural spa Termas de São Pedro do Sul, groups of people stand chatting, passers-by wander here and there, some of whom are wearing the attire of the folkloric groups. The sun is now just a gleam lost in the distant blue of the hot summer's night. Meanwhile, on the street, the lamps are being lighted: they are spotlights breaking the continuous path that the procession of singers will follow, from the top of

the village to the churchyard. There are more and more people lining the street, causing a great hubbub.

In the evening, the procession begins to take shape when the church clock strikes half-past nine and shortly thereafter groups of singers (only two are mixed men and women) spread along the street, each one carrying a sign with the name of the place where they come from. In front is the group from Bondança, then the group from Lageal, from Carregal, from Sernadinha, from Sequeiro. The group from Bustarenga only has two members, a grandmother and her granddaughter¹. The Carregal group, with five female participants, includes a Luso-descendant (locally called a “French”), a daughter of Manhouce migrants in France. In the mixed Vilarinho group, one notices the accented Portuguese of Brazil. The groups with the most members are from Vilarinho and from Manhouce, the capital of the district. The flashes of cameras, coming from various directions, are constant. I take advantage of their light to film the singers from Bondança that everyone was admiring: Carminda, who is also a lyricist, Fátima, and her mother, Maria Tavares. On the street, there are so many people that it is hard for the spectators to keep back from the performers.

And then the groups begin walking as they sing “Ó povo deste lugar!” (People of this place). The lower voices begin; at the end of the second verse the second voice enters, a third above and in a parallel movement, and at the end of the third verse, the third voice enters in parallel fifths with the lowest voice. Each voice has a specific designation: voz de baixo (the lowest), raso and riba (the highest). The cantiga or moda, the local designations of each of the songs, is strophic and each stanza is structured in the same way, with the parts entering successively, always pausing on the penultimate syllable of the last verse.

The groups walk down the main street singing and, on arriving close to the church, they begin to apupar (a type of collective whoop).² They go around the church and back to the main street, now in the opposite direction. They stop in front of the small square with the fountain, together with a crowd of people. According to the order of the procession, each of the groups ascends the three steps of an adjacent stairwell, becoming more visible, and sings two cantigas for the audience. They are cheered and then withdraw to make way for the following group. The group from Manhouce ends the procession and the performance. With the exception of this group, comprised mainly of members of As Vozes de Manhouce (The Voices of Manhouce), a female group formally constituted in 2008, all the others were organised during the week preceding the event. (Field notes 2017-08-11)

1. http://anossamusica.web.ua.pt/anm/files/1537215540_Manhouce_Semana%20cultural%202018_GCgestosinho.mp4

2. <https://vimeo.com/262834082>

Cantos e Encantos (Chants and Enchantments) is one of the many events organised in Manhouce that mobilise the local population to collectively sing traditional songs in three voices and attracts visitors for the performance of multipart singing. The main driving forces are the singers from the female group As Vozes de Manhouce. For their multipart singing project, they mobilise the local authorities (the town and parish councils) and the people of the parish, including those that are dispersed throughout the different localities of that mountainous region.

This study is centred on multipart singing in Manhouce, a village which, in 1938, during the dictatorial regime of the Estado Novo (1933–1974), was the target of a process of cultural objectification (Handler 1988), and of the institutionalisation of folklore (Castelo-Branco and Branco 2003; Pestana 2000), with the aims of creating an image of “being Portuguese” and forcing the Portuguese into performing an ideological practice capable of “defending the prevailing order” (Paulo 1994:5).³ I argue that this process of cultural objectification persists to the present day by creating a palimpsest of double practices. Current traditional practices thus form a second text on top of the earlier layer of collective memories and forgetfulness. In the 21st century, eighty years later, rural musical traditions still have significance in this locality as an essential link both in internal and external networks. It is through rural musical traditions, mostly the multipart singing, that local agents and residents of Manhouce actively struggle for public space, for the relational space for meeting face-to-face, thus countering the fragmentation of their individual lives and the peripheralisation of the village. It is through the display of objectified “folklore” that they attract tourists to Manhouce and external recognition of their rural musical traditions. I argue that the repeated performance of musical traditions creates a shared understanding of what it means to be in the world (Habermas 1993:44), in a collective, intersubjective whole that strengthens the local society. In the 21st century, women actively create a powerful network surrounding the performances of multipart singing that is central to the sustainability of the local social life.

Description of the Context

When I took over the presidency of the Parish Council [in 1974, after the fall of the dictatorial regime], there was a school in Bustarenga, a school in Gestosinho, in Vilarinho, in Carregal, in Manhouce we had four teachers [...] and we managed to start the Sernadinha school where we had 22 students. Today we only have the school of Manhouce with less than ten students. (Interview with Manuel Costa, Lageal, 2018)

Located in the mountainous central-north region of Portugal, Manhouce is one of 14 parishes in the county of São Pedro do Sul.⁴ Between 2001 and 2011, Manhouce’s population decreased by 22.62%. To the human depopulation, resulting from the constant migration of

3. This paper is part of the research project Sustainable practices: a study of the post-folklorism in Portugal in the 21st century (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-031782. LISBOA-01-0145-FEDER-031782) sponsored by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and the FEDER and POCI programs.

4. According to the latest population census, the county of São Pedro do Sul had 16,851 inhabitants in 2011, within an area of 349 square kilometres. (Information provided by the municipality and available at PORDATA, <https://www.pordata.pt/>)

the working-age population and from the low birth rate, one can add, since 2001, the desertification of the forest that was an important local source of income for this region. The economic crisis, which began in 2008, accelerated the emigration of the active population working in the construction, milk production and forestry industries. In fact, the forestry industry has been threatened on an annual basis since 2001. In 2011 alone, in the county of São Pedro do Sul, 5,227 hectares of forest were destroyed by fire.⁵

Records of migration from Manhouce date from the end of the 19th century. My earlier research has shown that the district archive of Viseu holds numerous requests for authorisation to migrate to Brazil, from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Pestana 2000). From the 1950s onward, the migratory fluxes shifted towards central Europe; France, Switzerland and Germany. According to António Laranjeira, the chairman of the parish council, continuous migration created two main types of nomadism: (1) residents of Manhouce reside outside of Portugal for work and return during the holidays and periods of local feasts, often accompanied by their new families formed in their host countries; (2) after their retirement, some of those who earlier emigrated from the village reside for about six months in Manhouce, and spend the other six months in their host country together with their children and grandchildren, who continue to live there (interview with Laranjeira 2017-03-03). This pendulous movement generates a wide range in the number of people who inhabit the locality and causes the periodic cohabitation of the residents with people of other nationalities and speakers of other languages.

Sustainability and Participation in Social Life

Studies of the processes of revitalisation of rural musical traditions tend to highlight plural subjacent dynamics and frame them within projects that intend to intervene in the present, with a view to the future of a particular community (Ronström 1996; 2014; Livingston 1999; 2014). As early as 1996, Owe Ronström proposed that revival is a process of traditionalisation that takes place in the present to create symbolic links to the past for future reasons. In an extensive study of music revival, Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill identify four motivational categories arguing that processes of revival accommodate one or more of the following categories: a dissatisfaction with aspects of the modern world; the bolstering of the identity of an ethnic group, minority group, or nation; “political” motivations; a practical response to natural or human disasters (Bithell and Hill 2014:11-12).⁶ By placing the emphasis of the analysis on the processes of revitalisation and on the worldview that shapes the actions of the revivalists, the authors determine that the “music of the past [is] an effective means of activism” (ibid.). However, as they mention, this process moves in parallel with the legitimisation of the “authenticity” of the revived practices. Tamara Livingston previously determined that this process of legitimisation is frequently defined as an

5. The impact justified the application, in 2017 and 2018, for European funds for the “Restoration of the forest affected by catastrophic events” (PDR2020-814-030236 and PDR2020-814-030237 (information provided by the municipality).

6. The authors use of the term ‘revival’ to refer not only to processes of revivalism, in the strict sense of the term as given by Livingston (1999), but to identical processes such as “revitalization”, “renaissance”, “rediscovery”, “reshaping”, “re-interpretation”, etc. (Bithell and Hill 2014:5). In the case studied in this paper I observed the first and the last of these motivational categories.

aesthetic and ethical code that is permeated by notions of continuity and organic purity (1999).

In the processes of revivalism, nostalgia for the past is common when one is faced with the realities of the current context. In truth, studies on the consequences of modernity emphasise an awareness of the dynamism that impels transformations and “distances us from the social order” (Giddens 1998:3). In Portugal, traditional music from rural areas has contextualised political and social movements (Castelo-Branco 1997), namely through young musicians inspired by ecological values, who organise events which require (1) the active participation of musicians and audiences in the practice of those values and (2) intergenerational collaboration, namely with the holders of the tradition (Pestana 2009). The ethnomusicologist Susana Moreno has also operationalised the concept of sustainability in her study of folk music festivals in the economically poor northeastern region, Trás-os-Montes, arguing that at those events, the revitalisation of traditional music is accompanied by the promotion of values associated with sustainable social development, such as human rights, equality and pacifism (Moreno 2015). Turino’s assumption regarding the relevance of the processes of participation in local social life and the role of small political cohorts in times of crisis (Turino 2008:229) is used by both authors as a point of departure.

From an international perspective, the theme “music and sustainability” was discussed from different points of view in a volume of the journal *World of Music* 2009, edited by the ethnomusicologist, Jeff Tod Titon. In analysing projects regarding the preservation of heritage music, Titon highlighted the importance of the values of safeguarding in relation to the values of diversity and interconnectedness, discussed economical versus ecological orientations, and proposed participatory projects, in which the holders of tradition, local agents and researchers collaborate (Titon 2009:119–120, 134).

The questions I ask in this study are the following: Considering the social and environmental constrictions faced by the society of Manhouce, how does traditional rural music contribute to the sustainability of its public social life, and the inhabitants’ experiences of being part of Manhouce society? Who are the agents in this process? And how do they ensure that young people and family members from abroad have the necessary skills to perform multipart singing? To what extent does the activism referred to by Bithell and Hill (2014) contribute to the development of sustainable ways of social life, and alternatives to the present-day world?

To answer these questions, I will analyse the process in terms of cyclical periods, showing how the cycles are intertwined, how, and under what circumstances, they constitute collective public manifestations, and discuss the agents who are operating in these situations.⁷ Given

7. Blacking reminds us that, “decisions [are] made by individuals about music-making and music on the basis of their experiences of music and attitudes to it in different social contexts” and also that, “we need to ask who listens and who plays and sings in any given society and why” (1978:12, 32). In turn, Timothy Rice’s research on Bulgarian music focused on the observation of two individuals. This apparently reductive position was legitimised by the theoretical framework, a framework that added a new factor to the determinants of historical or cultural order: the individual (Rice 1994:32).

that the performance of multipart singing requires each performer to have acquired embodied knowledge in addition to having developed a collective tacit agreement regarding the codes and values that inform these performances, this analysis also seeks to understand this relationship (the individual versus local society).

From my perspective, to conceptualise this case as a revival phenomenon is problematic. The prefix “re” creates a fracture which does not exist in the reality I have observed. In the “Re-flections” that serve as epilogue to *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, coordinated by Bithell and Hill (2014), Mark Slobin raises two questions that problematise the indiscriminate use of the prefix “re”: “does re- have to specify only a ‘second time’, or can this be the third or more times that people have considered whether today’s resources are sufficient for their needs? [...] can the prefix work to describe cultural action that might both reverse and restore ‘a previous state of things’?” (2014:667). I would like to add that the use of “re” does not make evident the reflexive appropriations of the previous “third time or more”. In fact, what I observe is more the persistence of a collective knowledge (although fragmented in each of the individuals that are part of that society), which cyclically allows collective response to both challenges and opportunities.

The notion of cyclical updating of the performance of multipart singing better conceptualises the reality of the study. Periods of hidden or silenced collective practices (although the memories and the knowledge remain in the body and the brain of each individual) have alternated (remaining as palimpsest layers) with periods of visible/audible action (which selectively integrates the collective experiences and memories of previous cycles, and reflexively reformulate them in the light of contemporary knowledge and values). This notion of cyclical updating interrelates the necessary knowledge for accomplishing multipart singing (which may be dormant or fragmented in individual bodies) with the collective processes of self-identification through multipart singing (giving life to the Manhouse culture and society), which can be triggered both in times of crisis and times of opportunity with new values and meanings.

I have conducted an on-going study in Manhouse since 1992. Over the years, I have completed my fieldwork in blocks, which allowed me to accompany and study different instances of the local revitalisation of multipart singing. This long-term fieldwork has registered the emergence of new protagonists and new social challenges; at the same time it has revealed palimpsests and continuity.

Cultural Objectification and the Institutionalisation of Folklore: Two Cycles of Multipart Singing Performances

Historically, in Manhouce the processes of cultural objectification (Handler 1988) and the institutionalisation of folklore in Portugal (Castelo-Branco and Branco 2003) have been documented in an exemplary manner.⁸ In 1938, the village was selected to participate in the contest, A aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal (The most Portuguese village in Portugal), an event which aimed to elect the village which “offered the highest resistance to foreign decompositions” and maintained the “highest degree of conservation at the purest level” (*Regulamento do Concurso* – Rules for the contest, 1938). The contest was idealized by António Ferro, one of the main ideologues of the dictatorial regime and implemented by the Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional (The Secretariat for National Propaganda), a branch of the autocratic Estado Novo (New State, 1933–1974), through several phases, evaluated by two juries: one local and one national, the latter presided over by the event's own mentor. The event was a strategy to counteract social and cultural change through the idealisation of a passive and “domesticated” popular culture (Silva 1992), with the rural world as its exclusive point of reference, as well as the acceptance of social inequalities (Félix 2003). In addition to a trophy awarded to the winning village, symbolised in a silver rooster, the National Propaganda Secretariat promised competing villages a set of benefits, such as a fountain or a road. These promises mobilised the population from Manhouce to organise themselves into a living exhibition of the idealised rural community (Pestana 2000). The contest engaged various Portuguese villages and was made famous through the state-controlled media. A propaganda documentary of the event was made, where the success of the event was summarised thus: “the folkloric and ethnographic rebirth of Portugal captivated the people from the villages themselves, awakening in them an enthusiasm, leading them to an awareness of the value of the treasures that were, and of which they are loyal custodians, exalting their nationalism.”⁹

In 1938, Manhouce had the ideal geographical, socioeconomic and human profile for the contest. It encompassed a stunning, natural mountainous landscape with no access roads (the members of the jury had to travel by horse or in ox carts) and no electricity. There was one secondary school student and two students in the Catholic seminary and one school under construction. The population was mostly illiterate, working in agriculture and livestock husbandry, with several local people having immigrated to Brazil. A local newspaper further praised the gender differences that defined the local society:

Woman – disconnected from contemporary life – understands and recognises her inferiority, in relation to man. Married, rarely walking side by side with her husband, limited to

8. I adopt the concept coined by Richard Handler to refer to the process of selection, de-contextualisation and attribution of a new meaning, which led to the understanding of culture as something which is limited to its representation through products (Handler 1988:15 pp.).

9. Music for the documentary was composed by the folklore artist Armando Leça, one of the members of the national jury that evaluated the participating villages. Armando Leça composed an orchestral suite based on the stylising of popular themes from each of the participating villages. <http://www.cinemateca.pt/Cinemateca-Digital/Ficha.aspx?obraid=2233&type=Video>



Figure 1. Members of the national jury from the contest the Most Portuguese Village in Portugal, 1938 (photographer unknown).

following him at a distance. She treats him as “sir”, accepting the familiar “you” from him in return. If the man departs – since the men from Manhouce migrate to Brazil – the woman wears strict mourning black, even covering her earrings with black cloth. And it is only after the return of her husband that the different coloured outfits also return. (Povo da Beira, 10th of October, 1938)

For generations, women in this locality practiced the musical expression of multipart singing in parallel melodic lines (which form chords of thirds and fifths). Participation in the contest required the organisation of a folklore dance group and of a “living exhibition” in which the daily local activities were exhibited to external spectators. External agents linked to the organisation of the contest established the first *rancho folclórico*¹⁰ with a chorus of 13 female members, a *cantadeira* and a *cantador* (a female and a male soloist), a *tocata* (containing one diatonic accordion and two plucked or strummed string instruments, one with four simple strings and another with six simple strings) and a mixed group of eleven dancing couples, all of them clothed in traditional Manhouce clothing (Pestana 2000). The repertoire was made up of choreographic *modas* (emic designations for both multipart singing and danced songs) cultivated by the residents of Manhouce, in their local social life. However, since the *rancho* would be exhibited in front of the judges in a “presentational performance” (Turino 2008), they pre-defined the sequence of the *modas* and rehearsed them, in order to determine their roles and synchronise their movements (interview with António Lourenço da Silva 1996).¹¹ These rehearsals were led by the local rehearsal director Bento dos Santos and supervised by Almeida Campos, a folklorist and musician who was part of the local jury.

The impact of this event was such that Serafim Costa, one of the locals responsible for the organisation of the *rancho* for the contest, recorded his memories under the title of “O início do folclore de Manhouce” (The beginning of folklore in Manhouce), in a manuscript that was

10. Designation given in Portugal to the institutionalised folkloric groups.
11. António Lourenço da Silva was part of the dance group of the Manhouce Rancho, organised for the contest in 1938. Two years later, he was one of the members of the rancho's *tocata*, playing Spanish guitar and, in 1953, he became its Artistic Director. António Lourenço da Silva was a skilled mandolin player (he also played the Spanish guitar and the violin), and in 1979, together with the singer Isabel Silvestre, was one of those responsible for the organisation of the Grupo Etnográfico de Cantares e Trajes de Manhouce (GECTM) (The Ethnographic Group of Singing and Traditional Costumes of Manhouce), a group which gained great visibility in the media, and in which he participated as player, singer (soloist) and rehearsal director. As the rehearsal director for GECTM, he made small adjustments to the traditional melodies, adapting them to new performative contexts for the traditional musical groups he directed. For example, he changed songs that were locally sung as solos or in unison to be sung in three voices (forming parallel thirds and fifths), such as, for example, the lullaby “Embalo” and the herding song “Aboio”. He introduced arrangements where the three voices started singing simultaneously instead of entering the song one after the other (Pestana 2000). He was also the author of popular songs, one of which was sung by Isabel Silvestre on the CD EU (2000).



Figure 2. Female members of the Manhouce Rancho, organised for the Contest the Most Portuguese Village in Portugal, 1938 (photographer unknown).

published posthumously (*Tribuna de Lafões*, 15th of March, 1980). However, folklore did not begin in 1938. In 1938, a process of cultural objectification began, which selected, decontextualised and gave new meaning to certain cultural products, namely the *modas*. This event generated the objectification of a set of social practices that came to be known as “from Manhouce” despite also being cultivated in other neighbouring localities. The contest introduced a rupture in the manner in which the Manhouce residents understood local musical and choreographic practices, as well as their manner of dressing: they became “Manhouce folklore”, that is, a cultural product ready to be displayed and evaluated by external observers.

Over the following years, the *rancho folclórico* went to different cities and towns around the country. However, with the exception of their participation in the “living exhibition” organised for the jury of the 1938 contest, they did not perform again in the village until the end of the 1970s. In Manhouce, the contest disseminated the belief that there was a substantial difference between a “spurious” and “de-characterised” urbanity and an “authentic” and “pure” rural environment, a difference, which in the 21st century, is still sometimes claimed in the speeches that precede folklore group performances in Manhouce.

After the reinstatement of democracy in April 1974, the groups formed under the autocratic regime continued their activity, but the performances were moved into other social and ideological contexts. The model of stage performance of a musical and choreographic repertoire for an audience of observers was widely disseminated, including through the mass media. Locally, as Salwa Castelo-Branco and Jorge Freitas Branco state:

What was once a state affair becomes material for local appropriation; it is at the autarchic level that the indispensable financing is generated. A folkloric heritage is instituted

(*repertoires and artefacts*), encompassing that universe of territories and identities, specialists, institutions, events, in sum, a frame of reference from which folklore transforms itself into cultural merchandise. (2003:15)

In turn, cultural associativity, which for more than 40 years had been monitored and controlled by the Estado Novo, resurfaced with a new vitality, encompassing the institutionalisation of new folklore groups (ibid; Pestana e Ribeiro 2013). In Manhouce new groups were also created to represent the local folklore. I am referring to the Rancho Folclórico da Casa do Povo de Manhouce (Manhouce Community Meeting House Folkloric Dance Group), the Rancho Folclórico Infantil da Casa do Povo de Manhouce (Manhouce Community Meeting House Children's Folkloric Dance Group), and the Grupo Etnográfico de Cantares e Trajes de Manhouce, GECTM (Manhouce Singing and Traditional Costumes Ethnographic Group), all instituted as initiatives of the Manhouce residents. During this new cycle of activity, the local administration took on an active role in its financing, bearing the costs of the logistics for performative activities, and even paying an annual subsidy to each of the groups. Within this context, the personal relations and networks of the local agents were activated. Faced with the disappearance of the contexts in which traditional knowledge was transferred, the groups began to have regular rehearsals for the local youth to learn *modas* and the necessary musical skills for performing the multipart singing, dances and the local *cantar ao desafio* (duet singing challenges). The groups participated in folkloric events at the national and regional levels, and even organised folklore festivals locally, which attracted groups from other localities. They also performed in foreign countries that historically have great numbers of Portuguese immigrants, such as Brazil and France.

A key figure in this process of knowledge transmission was Isabel Silvestre (b. 1941), soloist, and one of the founders of the Grupo Etnográfico de Cantares e Trajes de Manhouce (GECTM) and of the group As Vozes de Manhouce.¹² As a founding member of the GECTM, she was responsible, along with António Lourenço da Silva, for developing the group's repertoire. For this purpose, she contacted innumerable female holders of the local tradition, thus enlarging the repertoire, which she then passed on to the remaining members of the group. Isabel Silvestre is a holder of a tradition in which she learned multipart singing from her aunts at home. For decades, she was a primary school teacher in Manhouce and, in that capacity, she taught the school children to sing in one or two voices. From the 1980s onwards, she prepared the generations of singers that make up the local groups in the 21st century.

The Grupo Etnográfico de Cantares e Trajes de Manhouce distinguished itself from the two *ranchos* by abandoning the choreographic component. Dressing strictly according to custom, it specialised in

12. Isabel Silvestre with the group As Vozes de Manhouce, during the "Festa do Feijão", in 2016 http://anossamusica.web.ua.pt/anm/files/1539666748_O%20Maio_Vozes%20de%20Manhouce.mp4

multipart singing in parallel thirds and fifths. The group's performances and the expressiveness of its soloist Isabel Silvestre had a great impact on the audience, which was often overcome by emotion. Impressed by the repertoire and by Isabel Silvestre's voice, the head of A&R (Artists and Repertoire) at EMI Records, Valentim de Carvalho, opened the label's doors to the group (interview with Mário Martins 1999). In 1982, the group recorded the LP *Cantares da Beira*; in 1984, the LP *Aboio*; in 1985 the LP *Cânticos Religiosos*; in 1991 the LP *Vozes da Terra* and the reissue on CD of *Cantares da Beira*, all for the EMI label. Radio and television broadcasting of the phonograms ensured enormous visibility to the group and its soloist. It was because of this visibility that, from 1988 on, Isabel Silvestre also started to participate in artistic projects within other musical domains, for example, together with Rão Kyao (world music) or Rui Reininho, vocalist of GNR (a pop/rock band). Her vocal qualities, combined with the attained status of a folkloric singer (Pestana 2010), legitimised those collaborations.¹³

At the end of the 1990s, this boom declined, and the local groups ceased their activity. The explanation that my collaborators offer for this fact hinges on the depopulation of the village, as young people moved away. They also cited the impact of the music being disseminated by mass communication, the lack of interest in local traditions by young people, and the disappearance of the rural collective work contexts in which the local musical traditions were consolidated (interview with Lourenço da Silva 2000). It must be added that this decrease in the activity of formally instituted folkloric groups is a phenomenon I have also observed in other localities in Portugal.

The Third Cycle: Collective Performances in the Relational and Engaged Public Space

The third cycle began in a tenuous manner in 2005. In that year, Isabel Silvestre mobilised ex-members of the extinct GECTM and the local youth and formed the female group *As Vozes de Manhouce*. The regular rehearsals at the Manhouce Social Centre hall were made possible by support from the parish council, which assured transportation for the different *cantadeiras* (female singers) living in dispersed localities of that mountainous region (interview with Odete Costa 2017). Nowadays, on weekends, she brings together groups of children and young people at the Social Centre to teach them how to sing in unison and in two voices, starting with the *modas* that alternate between a solo and a refrain sung by all members of the group, concentrating only on the repetition of a limited number of songs. The prospect of heritage designation by UNESCO, in which Isabel Silvestre has involved herself actively, represents a motive for learning, for the youth and for the group. Simultaneously, Isabel Silvestre has managed, through her personal network in the entertainment and phonographic industries, to secure some invitations for the group to perform on stages outside of Manhouce, and to attract interest in recording the group from persons

13. I use the category "folklore" in the sense of a differentiating status because, as Rosenberg states, it presupposes a "belief", the acceptance *à priori* that what she sings is serious and has meaning (Rosenberg 1993:10)

such as the musical producer João Gil. In the 21st century, invitations and opportunities for folkloric groups to perform on stage are less frequent (Sardo and Pestana 2010). The economic crisis between 2010 and 2014, which devastated the lives of many Portuguese citizens, exacerbated the situation of the folklore groups: they lost part of their support from the municipalities, and invitations to perform outside the locality decreased as well (Pestana and Ribeiro 2013). Manhouce experienced a new wave of emigration, similar to the 1950s and 1960s, to Central European countries. However, members of the folklore groups as well as institutions developed resilience against these adversities by bringing the Manhouce people into the public space to repeatedly share “their” local heritage, remember “their” common history, and experience themselves as a collective, as I will show below.

The dynamics produced in the southern region of Portugal, from 2012 to 2015, around the recognition of the *cante alentejano* (Alentejo regional singing) as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, had an impact on the folkloric activity of Manhouce, as this activity was reflexively appropriated by the Manhouce activists.¹⁴ The application to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of the Manhouce multipart singing tradition became a recurring topic in the conversations between Isabel Silvestre and the president of the parish council. In a chain reaction, it became part of the conversations of members of the group As Vozes de Manhouce and of a growing number of Manhouce residents.¹⁵ The traditional rural music of Manhouce became the central topic of conversation and justified investments by the municipality in the organisation of events and in the formation of groups. Contrary to what had happened in previous cycles of the activation of the music tradition, it is now the women of Manhouce who lead most of the initiatives. Isabel Silvestre and the members of the As Vozes de Manhouce group reject the subordinate role of the Manhouce woman praised by elements of the jury in 1938.

In this third cycle, the local agents – Isabel Silvestre, the female group As Vozes de Manhouce, the mixed group Rancho Folclórico da Casa do Povo de Manhouce, the presidents of the municipality and the parish, and even the parish priest – join forces to safeguard the local traditions and to promote events aimed at both the population of Manhouce and the tourists; for example, the Cantos e Encantos night during the Cultural Week which I described at the beginning of this article.

This cycle is characterised by the way it has fostered knowledge of what is essential for the maintenance of rural multipart singing; knowledge of tunes and lyrics and of the technique of the superimposition of voices. This occurs via two main interrelated means: (1) the demonstration of folklore in its “natural” setting; and (2) the definition of a new calendar of social life, which summons the community to the public space to celebrate the arrival and departure of the emigrants, and reinforces the sense of belonging in the place of Manhouce. I will present these

14. I use the term reflexivity in the sense used by Anthony Giddens. He claims that in the context of modernity, the domain of actions is constantly reformulated in light of the knowledge produced. According to Giddens, knowledge “circulates into and outward from the universe of social life, reconstructing itself, and that universe, as an integral part of that process of circulation.” (Giddens 1998:11)

15. Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has been the subject of much analysis and heated discussion that I do not address here. In Manhouce, this is a recent and ongoing issue. A few months ago, I was invited to collaborate in an application to UNESCO for the inclusion of the Manhouce multipart singing as intangible cultural heritage. I made a counter-proposal, namely to listen to singers from other locations and to enquire as to whether they would be interested in aligning with the women of Manhouce for the application. I am currently establishing these personal contacts. It is a slow process, which will be analysed on completion.

two interrelated means in the following passages, discussing the local individual perspectives on the strategies of resilience and the updated reuse of multipart singing in order to ensure the sustainability of Manhouce's social ecosystem.

1. Ambivalent Social Practices: Exhibitions of Themselves and Collective Participatory Social Practices of Resistance. The *Demonstration of Folklore* in its “Natural” Setting Performances

The ancient was there [referring to the Festa da Vitela (Veal Feast)], the groups genuinely demonstrated that which is ancient. We have genuine images of women doing the washing in the river, barefoot, pounding quilts, which are not in this documentary. On Facebook, there are many recordings, which were done, and which I found interesting. I liked seeing the recordings on Facebook. Not least because they (referring to the elderly ladies who exhibited the arts of spinning linen and carding wool) possess the ancient tools, the women are spinning, they are knitting stockings, they are connected to the traditional activities of the past. (Interview with Ana Beato, 2018)

Since 2017, I have been working on a photo and film documentary – a visual ethnography – of the multipart singing of the municipality of São Pedro do Sul. During this process, I showed the members of the group As Vozes de Manhouce, in 2018, an unfinished version of the first sequence of images I shot with the documentarian João Valentim. The above quotation is an excerpt of an interview with Ana Beato,¹⁶ one of the female singers of the group. Ana Beato disagreed with our selection of images because, from her perspective, more centrality should be given to the “demonstrations of what was ancient and genuine about Manhouce” (ibid.), in other words, to the display of women doing the washing in the river, barefoot, pounding quilts, in the context of the work through which they emerged in the agrarian society of the past. Ana Beato has been collaborating with local groups since 1979 and feels that it is the demonstrations of folklore in its “natural setting” that best represent the local traditions in the 21st century, and in her opinion, can be attested to by the number of tourists that come to Manhouce to attend those events (ibid.).

16. Ana Beato (b. 1961) is one of the founding members of the group, As Vozes de Manhouce. From 1979 to 1990, she belonged to the famous Grupo Etnográfico de Cantares e Trajes de Manhouce. She is the daughter of Benta Gomes Beato, a singer from the Rancho Folclórico da Casa do Povo de Manhouce and the niece of António Gomes Beato, member of the Rancho Folclórico de Manhouce who, in 1938, was responsible for the compilation of the local history.

The rural live demonstrations, often referred to in Portuguese literature as recontextualisations (Sardo and Pestana 2010:1371), are not exclusive to Manhouce. They have been performed in different rural localities in Portugal since the turn of the century. However, the case of Manhouce diverges from the others: on the one hand, its aim is not the solicitation of funds for the maintenance of the folklore groups' activities; on the other hand, it reproduces the model of a “living exhibition” along the main street of the village, created in 1938 for inspection by the National

Jury for the contest A aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal. In fact, that event is invoked in the short speeches that precede introductions of the groups, and reference is regularly made to the fact that Manhouce came in second place.¹⁷ The contest constitutes an anchor, a central element, in the local social memory; it is a trump card, a distinction that one looks to, in the complex social field of folklorisation in Portugal.

The demonstrations imply a great financial investment by the local authorities, as they are open to the public and have little impact on the scarce local commerce and on the local agricultural and livestock activities (the farmers each raise an average of two or three animals). In addition, the civil parishes sometimes spend resources on food that they offer the attendees, as in 2017, at the *Desfolhada do milho* (corn husking) that was held on an improvised stage.¹⁸

A Festa da Vitela, organised annually since 2014 by the town and parish councils and the folklore groups, is a good example of these events. Despite the fact that it aims to advertise a regional bovine species and to promote the village as a tourist destination, the event was immediately appropriated locally as “the lay feast of Manhouce” due to the wide participation of the local population and the number of visitors that it brings to the village (interview with Sandra Costa 2017). The feast takes place during two days and, besides the exhibition of the bovine species and the building of small stalls for selling handicrafts from the local municipality, there is an exhibition programme of the “living village” inspired by the 1938 model. It now goes under the title *Pelas ruas de Manhouce Cortejo Etnográfico: Usos e Costumes* (Through the streets of Manhouce Ethnographic Procession: Uses and Customs),¹⁹ and during which the now vanished agrarian communitarian life is showcased. In 2016 and 2017, the folkloric *ranchos* and the local singing groups coordinated the musical activities. The *ranchos* sang and played *modas de roda*, summoning children, young people, and visitors into the dance circle. The singing groups began the *cantedos* or *cantarolas* (emic designations for multipart singing) in two and three voices. The divisions between the roles of the attendees and those of the members of the groups were not always clear, as some female members of the audience frequently participated in singing one of the three voices. The know-how is not shared by the audience in a homogenous manner. Individually, the know-how is dispersed across most of the participants (some persons remember some of the verses, others know how to superimpose one of the voices, etc.), but collectively the result is one of totality and completeness. In this new cycle, the barriers between the “presentational performance” and the “participatory performance” are not always evident.²⁰

Between 2016 and 2018, in the context of the Veal Feast, an exhibition of ethnographic objects, local handicrafts and documents (such as photographs of Manhouce’s participation in the contest A aldeia

17. In the 1990s, when I began the study of the process of the institutionalisation of folklore in Manhouce, in the context of my master degree in ethnomusicology, I presented the results of the investigation I had conducted in the archives of that contest to the members of the folklore groups, who revealed that the village of Manhouce had been excluded from the final classification. Nevertheless, the groups continued to hold on to that title, maintaining that it was the information that Manhouce had received in 1938.

18. http://anosmusicaweb.ua.pt/anm/files/1503246096_Papagaio_Desfolhada.mp4

19. The program of the 4th Veal Feast, which took place in Manhouce on the 20th and 21st of May, 2017.

20. Thomas Turino proposed a more pluralistic approach to music making, using the concepts “participatory performance” and “presentational performance” and emphasising the social practices and values that distinguish both of them (Turino 2008:122-154): while “presentational performance” denotes a division between audience and performers, “participatory performance” implies the participation of all. However, the border between them may be permeable.



Figure 3. Demonstration of *modas* in three voices at a corn husking organised in Manhouce, in October of 2016, by the parish council and the local groups.

mais portuguesa de Portugal) was organised in the parish council headquarters, aimed at tourists (who numbered less than one hundred) attracted by the event. During this event, the fields are ploughed with the help of pairs of cows. Adults, young people and children husk the corn by hand, the butter once again is made by hand, the wood burning ovens are lit, and many Manhouce residents wear the traditional garments.

These demonstrations involve a significant number of the population in the face-to-face participation, from the local, appropriately costumed folkloric groups (which at these communitarian moments temporarily forget the tensions that exist between them), to the most elderly, who are brought by the local Day Centre van, to the local authorities represented by the parish council and the village parochial priest. Husking, reaping, and washing clothes in the river are contextualised in open spaces or in enclosures improvised for that purpose.²¹

Another example of the demonstration of folklore in a “natural” setting is the corn husking which the parish council organises annually, in collaboration with the local groups.²² At the husking organised in 2016, even though it was the group *As Vozes de Manhouce* that initiated the singing in three voices, the attendees joined in and integrated themselves into the polyphony. Manhouce residents who had emigrated and are now retired could thus remember the multipart singing they had joined in during their youth, learn new *modas*, and participate in the performance.

Women play a central role in these events, whether in the organisation or in the production, mobilising their families and relations for the events. For example, Sandra Costa, a farmer from Sequeiro-Manhouce who is also a soloist in the group *As Vozes de Manhouce*, guarantees the participation of all the women in her family, including her daughter, Susana Costa, who sings the *riba* voice (the sharpest voice) in the group, her mother-in-law, her aunt and her mother, who due to their age, can now only sing the *raso* (the middle voice).

21. <https://vimeo.com/262825385>

22. http://anossamusica.web.ua.pt/anm/files/1503246994_Deolinda.mp4

These demonstrations are shaped, on one hand, by an ethic which is based on the supposed “truth” of a paradigmatic past (held as “authentic”), in work (expressed in the representation of the rural arts and trades), and in the customary social norms (reproduced, for example, in the gender roles; while the men took up the pounding of the corn, the women took up the washing of clothes). On the other hand, these demonstrations are shaped by aesthetics, in descriptive portraits of rural life (treading the maize, washing the clothes in the river, shearing a sheep’s wool, etc.), in the containment of gestures and corporality, in the modal songs, in the multipart singing, in the exhibiting of the first written and sonic ethnographic sources, in the museological object. According to Maria do Céu, of the group *As Vozes de Manhouce*, the demonstrations of the husking, reaping, or washing in the river, are “living schools from which the youth can learn how it was done in the past. If not, they wouldn’t know how it was done, and everything would be lost” (interview with Maria do Céu, 2017). In fact, the events are part of a conscious battle against forgetting, but not merely that. By being widely published through different media, in order to attract visitors to Manhouce, the demonstrations also become tourist attractions for the many spa guests who fill up the thermal resort hotels of São Pedro do Sul. They exhibit the idealised agrarian society in a very selective way, as they learned to do 80 years ago during the contest, The most Portuguese village in Portugal. By displaying old customs and practices, in a real “live museum”, they offer the tourists a destination “where time ‘stands still’ or the past lives on, untouched by modernity” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:194).

The demonstrations in Manhouce have much in common with other live exhibitions held in different parts of the world. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett critically states regarding another context, also in Manhouce, “there is a work here, in both the archaeological and the curatorial imagination, a performance epistemology that places a premium on experience – visceral, kinaesthetic, haptic, intimate – and a performance pedagogy more akin to the nascent medium of virtual reality than to older models of learning. [...] More like hypermedia than a play, [...] visitors do not ‘passively’ watch a performance on a stage” (op cit.: 194–195). In Manhouce, demonstrations also give a second life to heritage as exhibitions of itself. The very designation they give to these events – the emic term *demonstrações* – emphasises this intention to display the Manhouce culture to external eyes and to prove (also to the villagers) that there is still culture in Manhouce, that there is still a social life in Manhouce based on tradition and collective memory. In fact, I only understood this after my conversation with Ana Beato: demonstrations are ambivalent social practices. They are also collective participatory social practices of resistance to the transformations that “distances [them] from the social order” (Giddens 1998:3), by safeguarding the diversity of knowledge embodied in practices such as shearing, making butter, weaving, singing, etc. The multipart singing is linked to the local imagery of peasant life and in that sense these

performance spaces of demonstrations are central to the survival of musical practice and of the local community. The demonstrations rescue the people from the compulsive isolation and solitude in which they live, and, even if ephemerally, provide them with moments of conviviality and social life. They stimulate the musical skills necessary for local multipart singing, which then shape the local society into a living body, as an ecosystem that shares the same public space. All these demonstrations are in fact (and now I agree with Ana Beato) more than simple exhibitions that display the Manhouse culture to the eyes of the tourists.

2. Resilience and Sustainability: Definition of a New Calendar of Social Life

The main agents in implementing the new calendar are the members of the groups As Vozes de Manhouse and the Rancho Folclórico da Casa do Povo de Manhouse. They intervene repeatedly in the public space, at moments that are significant for the local population, by performing the local traditions. Two cases exemplify this strategy: the evening of Cantos e Encantos integrated into the Cultural Week of Manhouse since 2014, which I described at the beginning of this paper, and the “farewell to the emigrants”, organised on the first day of January, at the end of the Sunday mass.

In the words of Isabel Silvestre, one of the organisers of the Cantos e Encantos, the events enable the “reunion between the present and the past and between those who were absent and now return” (interview with Isabel Silvestre 2017). In the field, I could observe that besides the Manhouse residents, and those who have emigrated, the event brought together new family members, speakers of other languages, and those with different accents, and connected all the age groups in the musical performance. This event invites residents from all the different dispersed localities of the Manhouse area to organise themselves previously in non-formal rehearsals, and to sing together in two or three voices. Some localities were not able to perform the three voices in all the *cantares*, and others were not able to perform the three voices in all the *modas*. As Natércia, from the Malfeitoso village stated, “we are few, but we want to participate. We only have a few singers, only six. It is me (she sings the *riba*), Almerinda (sings the *raso*), Fatinha, another neighbour, Patrícia and Sofia [...] We will attempt to sing [one song] in three voices, but the others will sing in only two voices as we don’t have enough people to sing in three voices”. The group from the village of Carregal includes a luso-descendent French woman.²³

Also the New Year Mass attracts a large part of the population of the Manhouse area. It is a special day for the Manhouse residents, as it signals the end of the Christmas feasts and the return (departure) to their host countries of those who have emigrated. Inside the church, the mass is celebrated with songs in three voices, sung by the congregation,

23. http://anossamusica.web.ua.pt/anm/files/1537216305_Manhouse_Semana%20cultural%202018_GCCarregal.mp4

who fill the main nave.²⁴ At the end of the mass, and after kissing the Baby Jesus, they return to the street space. It is there that, since 2014, players and singers from the Manhouce groups get together with other residents to sing “People of this place!” to the emigrants who are departing. In 2017, the players were members of the current *folklore rancho* and from the (now discontinued) Grupo Etnográfico de Cantares e Trajes de Manhouce. The main singer was Hugo do Messias, a 16-year old boy. Singers, players and dozens of attracted Manhouce residents occupied the street space, in the end applauding and greeting them with *vivas* (cheers).²⁵

Upon exiting the New Year Mass and before some depart for other countries, the people connect through the musical practice in a moment of festivity and village participation. This event takes place annually, and it is thus likely that it will take place next year as well. The farewell event was conceived and introduced by the Manhouce *folklore rancho* as a way of actively struggling in favour of cohesion of the local, and thus strengthening the resilience against the local human depopulation (interview with Hermínio do Messias 2017). These are acts of resilience – against oblivion, and of activism for what they claim to be *nossa terra*²⁶ (our earth/homeland), and society.

Concluding Discussion

This study discusses three cycles of public performances of multipart singing in the Portuguese village of Manhouce in order to understand why and how local societies produce, safeguard and activate collective memories, cultural traditions, and musical performances. In the three cycles analysed, the multipart singing and other local rural traditions have been a tie uniting the population of Manhouce in response to external challenges, namely: in 1938, to achieve the benefits promised by the National Propaganda Secretariat; in the 1980s, the opportunity to access the music industry and media; and in the 21st century, resistance to external setbacks and oblivion.

I argue that in the 21st century, the performances in the public space of the village assure the sustainability of Manhouce culture and society by adapting, reusing, sharing, and transmitting the knowledge of multipart singing. The performances connect memories of the “old” rural life with the present, and they constitute a resource of social cohesion, collective memory, collective identification, and belonging. This study shows that the knowledge of the local multipart singing within the individual memory of each performing body/person – including when this knowledge is fragmented or discontinued – is a common resource, ready to be consolidated as a whole, not only in times of crisis but also in times of opportunity.

As the most recent layer of writing on the palimpsest, this knowledge is shared, and remains ready for collective action, through cyclical periods

24. <https://vimeo.com/262827003>

25. <https://vimeo.com/262830872>

26. The metaphor *terra*, which the inhabitants of the village use repeatedly to express themselves as a community of place, refers to a space created through social practices (collective projects such as demonstrations, and the new calendar of social life), and shared by those particular subjects.

of musical performances, operated by smaller or greater numbers of people, agents consisting of individuals (mostly women) as well as institutions. Thus, it is also transfigured into current meanings, hiding or covering earlier layers.

Throughout the 20th century, and even more forcefully in the 21st century, the locality under analysis underwent great transformations as a result of the impact of modernity, the successive economic crises, the migratory movements of its inhabitants, the global cultural fluxes which traverse media and electronic communication, and, more recently, the consequences of climate change on the local forested areas. These setbacks threaten the locality, pushing its active population to migrate, obliging residents to adapt to the consequences of such mobility, and breaking intergenerational ties. However, the 21st century does not only bring threats. The expectations related to the UNESCO label of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is considered, by the activists for the sustainability of multipart singing, to be an opportunity for the dissemination and disclosure of “their” musical practices, crucial factors for cultural sustainability in the present. Women are the main agents in this process. If, in 1938 they were exploited by autocratic policies, used as objects in the construction of totalitarian and discriminatory narratives, 80 years later they are the masters of the performance. They update social practices in order to respond to present-day opportunities and challenges; they are the promoters of events that disseminate expressive behaviours. They are also responsible for the acts of knowledge transmission through the training of children, youth and foreigners from the migrants’ new families, thus ensuring the sustainability of their culture and of public social life.

Cyclically, reiterated collective multipart singing performances in the public space produce participants who share memories, experiences and knowledge that sustains Manhouce society. The activists for the sustainability of the musical traditions of Manhouce repeatedly weave their small society into rehearsals and performances (teaching and consolidating skills and knowledge, updating memories and interests), and the integration of different members (including different generations, and those that come from abroad, as is the case with new family members that established emotional and/or matrimonial links with the emigrated Manhouce residents). The number of musical performances organised in that the small village is great, considering the number of residents and the scale of the territory. It requires indefatigable activity of a large number of the population, and the constant power negotiation between the different individuals and local institutions.

In this process, the subalternisation of women and the linkage of the 1938 contest to the totalitarian ideology of the Estado Novo are concealed. The sustainability of this community of practice depends on the ability both to remember and forget.

From my own perspective, in the present third cycle, the groups from Manhouce capitalise on the social consensus which was achieved in the previous cycles, around the values of the long history and the supposed “authenticity” of Manhouce folklore, in order to creatively intervene in and resolve current problems in the local society. In this process, those inherited values are pillars that nobody wants to see questioned. Indeed, no one questions the fact that the village of Manhouce was selected as a symbol of the policies and values of an autocratic regime. They approach that 1938 contest in a decidedly selective way, focusing on the distinction they won at the time and the knowledge of how to display their culture. In fact, while the discourses converge around those immutable values of “authenticity”, “antiquity” and “uniqueness”, performative practices (for example, integrating different generations, new family members, speakers of other languages, and those with different accents) create space for multiple experiences, which are constantly reformulated and actualised. These experiences are thus allowed to be operationalised in the resolution of Manhouce’s social problems in the 21st century, and in the integration of the social diversity that characterises the place. These collective projects, in which the holders of tradition and other local agents collaborate, provide the intersubjective experiences of being in the world as well as the interconnection between different generations. They improve specialised common musical knowledge and skills that are still crucial to the sustainability of local culture and public social life. The multipart singing tradition may be regarded as a cyclical resource of social cohesion, of social memory and of collective identification and belonging. Each of the new cycles of collective performance in the public space reflexively appropriates the knowledge acquired in previous cycles and simultaneously actualises it in the light of contemporary worldviews. ■

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