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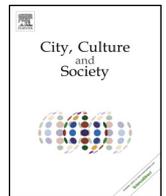
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Musical borderlands: A cultural perspective of regional integration in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This paper deploys a notion of “musical borderlands” to understand the practice and meaning of music production in an African context. This concept stresses flow rather than stasis, and liminal not dualistic thinking and being; it also relates economic and social practices to cultural content. It shows how Francophone (West and Central) African participants in hip hop music use translocal networks to sustain their community, and demonstrate dynamic relationships between material production and social reproduction. This enables new socialities to emerge with the potential to rearticulate political relations, which reaffirm trans-local, trans-urban, trans-border solidarities.

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Introduction

High taxation and tariffs as well as complex visa procedures significantly illustrate a government bureaucracy that impedes a facilitative framework for the circulation of goods and people within a region. From this perspective, it can be argued that public officials and authorities in West Africa have poorly invested in the music sector. In fact, and in spite of forming an economic community (ECOWAS), in the ‘West African ensemble’, the management of copyright remains deprived of any regional harmonisation. Such a failed coordination illustrates the constraints created by a national approach, one that challenges the imperative of producing musical goods for wider markets than domestic ones. To confront this, the concept of “musical borderlands” is here suggested to read and render visible regional integration in Africa as expressed in the practices of their “ordinary” citizens that are already at play across borders.

Researchers have recently considered “borderlands [as] vanguard landscapes of globalisation” (Konrad & Nicol, 2011, p. 70); in particular historians, who have been at the forefront of borders and borderlands studies, recognise that Africa, as the continent with the youngest borders, has demonstrated “the most buoyant borderland historiography” (Baud & Van Schendel, 1997, p. 235). Going beyond the conventional focus of borderlands literature on material frontiers, this article stresses an active role of African musical borderlands, and inquires into “what borderlands can teach us about ways of conceptualising social space and local identity” (Baud & Van Schendel, 1997, p. 241).

This paper is structured in three major sections. First, it addresses issues relative to the planning of the lands and borders of African music, with the objective of stressing the use of a relational thinking as well as the value of practical planning in approaching this field. As musical borderlands are to be revealed through practice, a second section argues for an appropriate contextualisation of entrepreneurial and networking practices. Linking cultural products and practices with the social conditions of production, the third part provides an incursion into the material and symbolic borderlands of Francophone (West and Central) African

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Hip Hop, to make a case against fixed and dualistic concepts and approaches of borderlands.

Planning the lands and borders of African music

Contrary to the partial realities of the Global North, most policies concerning the cultural economy in African contexts have been undertaken at the national level; there is, in other words, a prominent ‘national land’ of planning, marked by a state-centred approach, regarding cultural production in general, and musical production in particular. The concept of musical borderlands is here suggested on the premise that African music, as a sector, can be theoretically and symbolically relevant for it can significantly frame and inform processes of regional integration, through its unique economic and cultural perspective.

Relational thinking of the lands of African music

The proposed analysis of African musical borderlands draws on relational thinking, as “a promising theoretical avenue to explore the contemporary mobile world and its circuit of commodities, people and ideas” (Jones, 2009, p. 493). This paper weaves dialogic imports from cultural geography (Nash, 2000, p. 654) with the literature on borders and borderlands studies, while reconciling the material prominence of the latter with its symbolic perspective as developed in its Chicano strand. The intention here is to draw attention to the non-economic as well as non-material drivers of cross-borders cooperation, through a relational analysis (one that tries to avoid false dualisms), concerned with the linkages across, via communities of practice, which mobilise and construct new forms of solidarities (invisible to binary thinking).

Relational thinking of spaces such as borderlands insists on “the open-ended, actor-centred, and mobile politics of spatiality”, while explicitly challenging “claims for a political economy of scale” (Jones, 2009, p. 488). Considering that both macroeconomic phenomena and processes occurring on the ground actually shape development (Scott & Storper, 2003), the argument is to go beyond a state-centred planning of the cultural economy, thus putting an emphasis on practices. The existing planning framework – related to general public policies as well as the ones about the cultural economy – remains formulated from a specific government related view. Therefore, this paper develops from the recent invitation of planning studies scholars for planners to “profoundly re-orientate their view and re-direct their perspective towards an outside-inward approach: this would involve [...] starting from the practical basics and with reference to the

aims of key stakeholders in civic and business society” (Boelens, 2010, p. 30).

While research in management studies have proven to be useful for network analysis and the inquiry into agency and entrepreneurship (Boggs & Rantisi, 2003, p. 114), the following examination of African musical borderlands further elaborates on the precise nature of how space and actions are co-constituted, while being sensitive to particular contextual constraints. It thus stresses the multiple dimensions of ‘borderlands’ as a conceptual space of intersections between locational, situational, aesthetic, material, and entrepreneurial endeavours. As such, this perspective is aligned with a body of work that looks at this relational element of practice and of regional development, while highlighting the dynamic relationships between material production and social reproduction. Challenging dualistic approaches in favour of relational modes, the following analysis furthers network and community studies, by connecting economic and social practices to cultural content.

Practical planning of the borders in African music

There is a paucity of reliable and quantifiable information on the potential of an African music economy, both at national and regional levels, which led to a dualistic thinking in development policy that has not seriously looked at practices. This calls for elucidating the informal and invisible practices more fully; besides, it resonates with Sandercock’s engagement with the invisible discourses of the borderlands and the relevance of this metaphor for planning theory and practice (Sandercock, 1995, p. 77). Including new voices – those of non-planners – into the discourse of planning theory (Sandercock, 1995), can be paralleled with the critique of state-centred approaches in border studies literature, while also resonating with the call made in Chicano literature on borderlands for an “epistemology of multiplicity” (Gómez-Peña, 1993). Indeed, if borderlands are these ‘in-between’ places marked by constant exchange, negotiation, and partnership (Zutshi, 2010, p. 595), then we need to challenge the governmentally focused perspective of planners both in practice and in theory. Sidestepping duality between macro- and micro-, this calls for an active focus on actors (Boelens, 2010, pp. 35–8).

The conceptualisation of borderlands as a metaphor in planning theory and practice (Sandercock, 1995) echoes the political economic use of “analytic borderlands” in addressing the global urban economy (Sassen, 2002). Through this concept, Sassen encourages a focus on the actual production process, acknowledging borderlands as spaces constituted in terms of discontinuities that reveal the multiplicity of economies and work cultures. Similarly, this article

stresses and illustrates the significance of looking at the work of producing and reproducing the organisation and the management of production system, as well as the grounded places of the market and transaction activities (Sassen, 2002, p. 139). Indeed, taking African musical borderlands seriously implies confronting a dominant narrative that presents the economy as a neutral, ordered, efficient and technical ‘thing’, with multiple spatialities and identities that nurture new forms of solidarities. While such dimensions have remained invisible, being represented as superfluous or marginal, they allow a relational analysis that, on one hand, goes beyond dividing lines (and toward a liminal terrain) between economic practices and cultural content; and another hand, asserts borderlands as both symbolic and highly political spaces.

While music production was never recognised by public officials as a key economic force, the African music sector has been largely dominated by an informal economy that operates without any regulation capable of helping the sector to raise finance, improve labour condition and upgrade generally its economy (Barrowclough & Kozul-Wright, 2007, p. 19). In fact, musical borderlands in Africa have emerged and had been deployed, from below and on the ground, by individual participants and urban communities, on the margin of state constraining interventions. In this regard, African musical borderlands are to be revealed through their practices.

Musical borderlands in practice

Drawing on the managerial concept of “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998), this section stresses a cultural perspective of regional integration in Africa, deployed through the lens of distinctive working practices of participants in the music field. Indeed, translating musical borderlands in practice, multiple communities in Africa have developed “in larger contexts – historical, social, cultural, institutional – with specific resources and constraints [...] [and their] day-to-day reality is produced by participants within the resources and constraints of their situations” (Wenger, 1998, p. 79). Besides, insights from entrepreneurship studies (Ekinsmyth, 2011; Johannisson, 2011; Steyaert & Katz, 2004; Steyaert & Landstrom, 2011) confirm the practical dynamics of these communities, while they recognise the existence of an “organising context”, which, deeply rooted in everyday local, emerges as the focal arena for interaction, learning and control in “entrepreneurship” (Steyaert, 2007). To insist, this organising context stresses the importance of situating participants and locating their practice in a relational fashion.

Entrepreneurship in musical borderlands

African musical borderlands involve complex networks and relationships, through which African music participants actively create and produce organisational and entrepreneurial spaces in their own image. In this sense, it is useful to refer to a conceptualisation firmly grounded in the ‘relational turn’ in economic geography, namely “transnationalising entrepreneurship” (Yeung, 2009). This has been defined as “a particular form of entrepreneurship embodied in specific actors who transcend multiple spaces, territories, and scales” (Yeung, 2009, p. 211). As such, it recognises that territoriality in entrepreneurial spaces is highly ‘stretchable’ (Yeung, 2009, pp. 214–15), and that the “local is never just local, but always intersected through flows of other levels” (Steyaert & Katz, 2004, p. 192).

Furthermore, rather than focusing on ‘faceless’ entrepreneurial firms, the conditions and the environments of their performances, “transnationalising entrepreneurship” both conceptualises “the entrepreneur as the driving force in the formation and transformation of the networks in which s/he is embedded”, and entrepreneurship as a “complex sociospatial economic phenomenon” (Yeung, 2009, p. 230). As such, it permits “observing creative processes at the level of the individual as key actors in the creative economy [...] [something that] is more powerful and relevant than observing organisation and places, precisely because it gets to the essence of creative enterprise as a process” (Granger & Hamilton, 2010, p. 51).

Emphasising the situated nature of their organisational process, this literature, applied to the research context, recognises that African musical borderlands reveal a social practice that needs to be contextualised, localised and situated by drawing upon and empirically grounding such concepts as networks and local communities (Steyaert & Landstrom, 2011, p. 124). Inviting us to rethink the boundaries of entrepreneurial spaces, it considers the spatial production of entrepreneurship through socio-cultural processes and a geography of entrepreneurship that is always geopolitical (Steyaert & Katz, 2004, p. 180).

Importantly, there are social and aesthetic dimensions in practicing musical borderlands that are irreducible to economic innovation and that often constitute the very reasons for participating in this cultural field in the first place. In this sense, innovative possibilities are not just economised but involve “a much more complex view, where the cultural, the economic, spatial, relational and institutional become understood in their integrative effect” (Steyaert & Katz, 2004, p. 189). As such, an appropriate contextualisation of the form and practice relative to African musical borderlands is necessary in order to recognise the inclusion

of non-economic rationale in the discourse of music workers and participants.

Networking in musical communities

As far as African musical borderlands are concerned, there is a significant relationship between its participants and the context of their entrepreneurial and organisational practices. In fact, as for many music participants, their principal productive spaces are interlocking and flexible networks, service systems (UNCTAD & UNDP, 2008, p. 69) as well as embedded clusters, in which knowledge sharing is an important asset (Hölzl, 2005, p. 12). Such a “relational” perspective of musical practices has been adopted early on by researchers who demonstrate its heuristic efficacy in thinking of these cultural fields as a form of *analysis situs* (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 29–30).

This approach links cultural products and practices with the social conditions of production of both the producers and consumers as a productive community, a “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998). In this sense, the everyday reality of participants acting through African musical borderlands can be approached as a “transnational localism” (Smith, 2003). Indeed, “focusing on the level of communities of practice is not to glorify the local but to see these processes – negotiation of meaning, learning, the development of practices and the formation of identities and social configurations – as involving complex interactions between the local and the global” (Wenger, 1998, p. 133) and, as far as our borderlands are concerned, between the local and the regional.

Besides, and as previously suggested, “communities of practice should not be reduced to purely instrumental purposes. They are about knowing, but also about being together, living meaningfully, developing a satisfying identity, and altogether being human” (Wenger, 1998, p. 134). Similarly, communities of African musical borderlands support participants in fulfilling their materialistic as well as existential concerns as they develop their enterprise (Steyaert & Landstrom, 2011, p. 128). Again, such an approach liberates “entrepreneurship” (Steyaert, 2007) from a narrow-minded association with economic activity alone, while inquiring into this practice as a means of creating a new way of life, an “existential venturing aiming at crafting one’s own identity” (Steyaert & Landstrom, 2011, p. 139).

Therefore, participants in the communities of African musical borderlands “are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and [...] open new possibilities of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). Through their networks unfolding in a transurban, transborder, and translocal fashion, these participants give rise to a

distinctive and promising materiality of African musical borderlands. As an illustration of the latter, I shall now turn to one of its specific geography, namely Francophone African Hip Hop.

Material and symbolic borderlands of African Hip Hop

Contrary to official and normative approaches of policy-makers towards cultural production from a domestic stance, Francophone West African hip hop participants have developed a translocal materiality of their music economy, and deployed coordinated mechanisms across and beyond national borders. In this regard, I have argued elsewhere how the hip hop ethical economy informs both a distinctive peer musical production and a communal form of governance for this productive community.¹ Here however, I want to highlight how Francophone African hip hop music as a cultural production, dually articulates transcultural politics and its translocal materiality, significantly weaving together the cultural and economic dimensions in the practices of specifically situated participants in African musical borderlands.

On material hip hop borderlands: translocal networks of communal promotion and organisation

Francophone African Hip Hop reveals a specific transurban and translocal productive community that performs in and through its distinctive musical borderlands. Indeed, dually allying their textual and material practices, hip hop participants directly organise a distinctive hip hop interface with the market (Bauwens, 2007, p. 246). As such, their community – this ‘emotional site’ that is, at the same time, localised, translocal and virtual – reaffirms its ever-expanding translocality, with participants linking and interacting, whether physically or virtually² – depending on their respective and accumulated skills. In doing so, they stress how the “idea of regional integration involves collaboration between neighbouring countries in different parts of the continent and stronger cross-border flows of goods, services, labour, capital and information” (Turok, 2010, p. 22).

“Nowadays, [the hip hop movement] gets stabilised and people want to work together without consideration for the geographic zone each lives in or the style of hip hop one does. Today, the actors have the desire to work together as they know that it is the only way out to

¹ See Mbaye (2014).

² Many participants know and refer to people they have actually never met, but with whom they have been exchanging and transmitting information on their respective hip hop scenes (via ICTs) for years, thus becoming trustful peers.

survive.” (Hip hop music maker and worker, Dakar)

Hip hop participants offer practical examples of informal cross-boundary cooperation, especially through the development of distinctive hip hop promotional networks. Indeed, their strategic promotion emphasises the social sources of flexibility only enabled by the digital reproduction and its correlative technologies, where hip hop participants have created new social spaces of interaction. Besides, being specialised in graphic design and video production, some of these participants have boosted and levelled up the practice of video clips production, as well as regularly appropriated and developed new promotional tools, such as EPK³ and teasers. In fact, hip hop media participate in the construction of *both* a community and a market (Théberge, 1991), while they are a link not only between economic practices and their relative market, but also between different cultural practices. Specifically, the virtual spheres⁴ express, reflect and promote a translocal materiality of the hip hop community, of this distinctively situated African musical borderland and its geographically remote peers.

As far as African integration is concerned, “a collaborative approach might make industrial diversification easier and more sustainable through shared learning and development of clusters of related products” (Turok, 2010, p. 23). In this respect, hip hop musical borderlands uncover an interesting collaborative approach based on cost-recovery mechanisms, which reveals translocal networks of communal organisation: those of their dedicated festivals in West and Central Africa,⁵ which share a common thematic in terms of their productions. Such a kind of collaboration goes a step further with the coordination of not only artistic but also technical/training dimensions of their festivals.⁶ Organising these seminars stems from the common recognition that hip hop festivals are a privileged location for one of the main dimension of the development of African Hip Hop: training and formation. Such trainings and dedicated formation

initiatives are especially important considering how out-dated are the current training art/music schools. In this sense, besides being a real sphere of recognition (through awards and fanzines), of expression (through podiums and shows), and of public education (through conferences and film screenings), hip hop festivals of the Francophone (West and Central) African ensemble encourage professional exchanges and developments, while furthering their translocal networks.

The objective of networking for these organisations is to share knowledge, contacts and strategies to ensure their respective sustainable development. This interestingly resonates with the “mestiza consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 1987) of Chicano borderlands, which is about this “need to keep moving on, to explore and to go beyond” (Sandercock, 1995, p. 80). While conventional political–economic approaches assume regional trade dynamics based on formal rules and conventions, the incursion into hip hop musical borderlands includes in our purview other forms of production and transactions, making a case for such alternative cartographies, which refer to “both material and metaphysical alternative spaces” (Sandercock, 1995, p. 82). In this regard, our analysis would be incomplete without going beyond the material and inquiring into the symbolic as a dialogical learning outcome of this case study.

On symbolic hip hop borderlands: organic aesthetics and transcultural politics

Reading the symbolic dimension of hip hop borderlands stems from the premised invitation to go beyond binary thinking, namely the centre/border thinking and to adopt a “liminal approach” (Nouss, 2005, pp. 51–52) that not only disregards the centre, but also critically questions the borders. A “liminal thinking” suggests an ontology of the border that is the exact contrary of an ontological border: an “ensemble of specificities” that becomes differential, in perpetual movement, and not an ensemble of fixed differences (Nouss, 2005, p. 58).

Border and its ‘lands’ are then a *seuil, limen* (“threshold”) rather than a barrier, a tangent rather than a line of separation, a “third space” (Bhabha, 2004) that is not really an “in-between”. Indeed, the ‘third’ is plural, diverse, alive and multiple and allows for another sensibility than the reigning binary that still blocks the development of new being and thinking emergences. A “liminal thinking” that confronts any essentialisation with a *pluri-essentialism* (Nouss, 2005, p. 44), and permits us to conceptualise Hip Hop as an ‘ensemble of specificities’; with each singularity being inscribed in the diverse and multiple receptacles of social marginalisation, of “borderline condition” (Bhabha, 2004). As such, Hip Hop constitutes a phenomenon

³ EPK: Electronic Press Kit.

⁴ This is evidenced in the proliferation of social networking platforms such as ‘Myspace’ or ‘Facebook’ as well as promotion and distribution dedicated websites such as ‘Bandcamp’ or ‘ReverbNation’.

⁵ Gabao Hip Hop Festival (Gabon); Waga Hip Hop Festival (Burkina Faso); Hip Hop Kankpe Festival (Benin); Assallamalekoum Festival (Mauritania); Hip Hop Awards (Senegal); Festival Festa’2H (Senegal); Togo Hip Hop Awards (Togo); Guinean Africa Rap Festival (Guinea-Conakry); Hip Hop Wassa Festival (Niger); Mali Hip Hop Awards (Mali); but also in non-Francophone countries: Big Up GB – Movimento Hip Hop Festival (Guinea-Bissau); Hi-Life Festival (Ghana); as well as in Francophone Central African countries: Ndjam Hip Hop (Tchad); Bangui Hip Hop (Central African Republic); Couleurs Urbaines (Cameroon); Woïla Hip Hop (Cameroon); 5Jours de Hip Hop (Congo-Brazzaville); Air d’Ici (Democratic Republic of Congo); Lubum Hip Hop (Democratic Republic of Congo); Malabo Hip Hop (Equatorial Guinea).

⁶ For instance, these festivals offer workshops of creation in dance and graffiti, as well as specific trainings furthering the professionalisation of hip hop participants in sound (PA) and light system and design, in video clips production and realisation, and in art critic and cultural journalism.

localised on the borders, on the margins of an assumed sociality and often urbanity; however, for each emergence, the borderline position in the society is distinctively situated.

Hip Hop is this ‘transcultural mediation’, which is not an ‘in-between’ but a “third space” (Bhabha, 2004; Nouss, 2005), a “path of passage” (Nouss, 2005), a constitutive location permitting singular action. Such a productive action is expressly salient in hip hop musical expression, where the performative process of constitution that is at play in this aesthetics underlines how hip hop music speaks to and through the body. The performances of the MC thus stand as a “writing of the voice” (*écriture de la voix*) (Rubin, 2004) that gives way to a semantic phenomenon, an emotional translation. As such, the voice is an “internal plural”, a “simultaneity” (Meschonnic, 1982, p. 292), an “infinite diversity” (Rubin, 2004, p. 9) in which bodies and emotions, the actual ‘real’, in other words, pierces through the symbolic (Rubin, 2004, p. 15). Rather than a reference to the reality of the artist, in the discursive performance of the MC, it is the actual individual that is given.

“I know where I’m going, and where I’m coming from / Young African with a microphone in hand / You want to know why I rap all day long / Young African with a microphone in hand / I have the science of lyrics that comes from the elders / Young African with a microphone in hand / [...] It’s life that remains hard to stomach for me / [...] It’s in my blood, [...] Spilled blood that spreads on each verse”⁷ (Negri, 2009)

‘Writing his voice’, organically performing his discourse, his “truth of desire” uncover the “form-subject”⁸ (Meschonnic, 1995) of “a young African with a microphone in hand”. As this quote points out, there is a hip hop ‘transcultural myth’, inspired by the multiple borderline situations, where the hero has to struggle in order to survive. However, this common myth and its poetics are revealed through the positioned, historicised singular discourse of an individual’s body and voice whose “life remains hard to stomach”. The action of talking then, this “science of the lyrics”, is situated “in his blood”: in other words, the MC lives “from” the language and “in” the language.

Through the “writing of the voice”, it can be argued that hip hop music allows hip hop participants to

become acting social and political subjects. In other words, hip hop music stands as a political action enacted by borderline socialities whose discursive performances challenge the fixed mappings of spatial structure and social order of the city. Such an understanding reminds and reinforces the metaphorical borderland in Chicano literature (Aigner-Varoz, 2000; Anzaldúa, 1987; Lugones, 1992) that includes both material (physical) and symbolic (emotional) borderlands, and thus rejects any binary conceptualisation of the concept. Indeed, “unknowingly developed more fully in oppressed peoples and those ‘caught between two worlds’ as a survival techniques [...], the faculty that creates a mestiza consciousness” can serve either as a ‘barrier against the world’ or as a vehicle for greater ‘awareness’ and ‘knowledge’ of the world and self (Aigner-Varoz, 2000, p. 52; pp. 59–60).

From this perspective, hip hop artists singularly talk about a common sociality: their individual narratives erected as political actions hold as a constant referent the ‘emotional site’ – i.e., the multiple in the singular – they represent. Hip hop music as a two-fold political action thus allows its participants to talk for those who cannot speak for themselves and give them by the same token the possibility of knowing and understanding (Benga, 2002, p. 302). The realisation of the documentary film “*Le point de vue du Lion*”⁹ by Didier Awadi perfectly illustrates this point. Announced in the EPK¹⁰ of “*Présidents d’Afrique*” as a form of extension of this musical project, this film values and contributes to another African history. Indeed, this film permits the broader public to understand and perceive an alternative viewpoint, an African one – with referential cultural (and political) expertise from the continent¹¹ – on the phenomenon of illegal immigration to Europe.

In this sense, this alternative practice of political discourse offers a potential role that youth can play in contemporary politics as citizens, reinventing and re-inventing the borders through a liminal being and thinking. *Métissage* singular and multiple “writing of the voice”, subjective and objective political discourses, hip hop music offers a perspective on Africa as a cultural and economic entity that has been not voiced, becoming by the same token, an impulse of change for social and political history (Howes, 1949, p. 169).

⁷ This is my translation of the original text: “Je sais où je vais, et d’où je viens / Jeune Africain, microphone dans la main / Tu veux savoir pourquoi je rappe du soir au matin / Jeune Africain, microphone dans la main / J’ai la science des lyrics qui me vient des Anciens / Jeune Africain, microphone dans la main / [...] C’est la vie qui me reste au travers de la gorge [...] J’ai ça dans le sang, [...] Du sang versé qui se répand sur chaque verset” Negri, 2009. *Toute une vie*.

⁸ Meschonnic invites us to think a “form-subject” specifically through poetics: to think of a “form-subject” is to think of language as a form of life, to think of the political and social subject (Meschonnic, 1995).

⁹ See for detailed information and teaser : <http://film.awadi.net/cinema/#/home>.

¹⁰ EPK (Electronic Press Kit) available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jllDcQjtexw> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihVoQacPq0k>.

¹¹ The film thus features high cultural personalities such as Abdou Diouf (2nd president of Senegal and General Secretary of the International Organisation of Francophonie), Aminata Dramane Traore (Malian politician and writer), Djibril Tamsir Niane (Guinean writer and historian), Manu Dibango (Cameroonian musician), Alphadi (Nigerien designer).

Conclusion

This paper provided a practical intervention to read processes of African regional integration, while inquiring into the emergence and deployment of musical practices across and beyond borders. Initiated and developed at the scales of ordinary African citizens and their urban communities, both symbolically and materially, African musical borderlands emerge and develop on the margins of national institutions responsible for the different cultural sectors. Historically, many of these institutions divided, in practice, cultural and political networks that were established before the colonial map was imposed on Africa. This paper has stressed a specific geography of African musical borderlands, i.e. Hip Hop in Francophone (West and Central) Africa, cutting across the imposed borders, demonstrating how deeply inscribed in the daily lives of people, cultural productions, such as music, display in their aesthetics and practices, a distinctive and novel articulation of regional integration in Africa.

Although recognised as contemporary sites of creative cultural production, borderlands have been viewed as undervalued and under-represented exceptions rather than central areas of research in the borders and borderlands literature that conventionally focuses on the rhetoric and intentions of central governments (Baud & Van Schendel, 1997, p. 212; Konrad & Nicol, 2011, p. 74). This paper found it particularly useful to draw on the Chicano literature, which developed a concept of the 'border' with strong symbolic connotations to African musical borderlands, and reconcile these two borderland literatures. In doing so, the analysis of African musical borderlands can be linked to the wider study of border regions which "implies a critique of state-centred approaches that picture borders as unchanging, uncontested, and unproblematic" (Baud & Van Schendel, 1997, p. 216).

In drawing on managerial and entrepreneurial insights, this paper has contextualised political and economic practices in the music field, recognising the inclusion of non-economic rationale in musical participation and cross-border solidarities. Inspired by cultural and translation studies for the analysis of musical borderlands, it was argued that there is also a very practical reason for including these perspectives in planning theory and practice. Indeed, "they are addressing issues of importance to the work of planners [...] [while] they are producing new ways of constructing knowledge, new ways of being in the world and, most importantly, new ways of acting" (Sandercock, 1995, p. 86). As such, the entrepreneuring practices in musical borderlands stressed how uncovering the practices and identities of the participants in African musical borderlands, while converging their

material and symbolic dimensions, is here key to develop successful and durable planning interventions for a cultural economy always embedded in unique local features (Boelens, 2010, p. 46).

It was in this respect that the notion of "third" and liminal space was used (Bhabha, 2004; Nouss, 2005) to account for and analyse "the relational and institutional embeddedness of network agents and their network activities" (Manning, 2010, p. 570). As illustrated by the suggested liminal approach, a relational thinking permits replacing simple forms of dualistic understanding by a dialectical, dialogical one. As such, spaces like musical borderlands, are always situated in distinctive identities and located in specific practices, being co-constituted, mobile and multiple. Inquiring into the symbolic dimension of borderlands, this paper thus reaffirmed how the borderland is both a symbolic and highly political space that needs to be considered as such. There is, in this sense, an emergency to rehabilitate the importance and relevance of a "detailed attention to the political, economic and cultural geographies of specific 'everyday practices'" (Nash, 2000, p. 662); indeed, borderlands unfold as a critical infrastructure of the cultural economy, although its theory still remains short in addressing identity and culture (Konrad & Nicol, 2011, p. 72; 84).

This paper stressed the value of analysing the use and development of translocal networks to sustain community. Francophone (West and Central) African participants in hip hop music show dynamic relationships between material production and social reproduction that, under contemporary capitalism, converge, allowing new socialities to emerge with the potential to create political relations. Therefore, as the transurban hip hop participants demonstrated, "borderland culture is actually doing the 'work' of building a context for cooperation" (Konrad & Nicol, 2011, p. 86); this is both a practice and an analytical perspective that may be productive in future research. In this regard, this paper has argued against using fixed, dualistic, concepts and showed the value and insight provided by a focus on a fluid, and becoming that is the lifeblood of cultural and creative practices.

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