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Street forró pé-de-serra in Rio de Janeiro: Between traditions and cultural hybridizations

*Forró pé-de-serra de rua no Rio de Janeiro: Entre tradições e hibridações culturais**Forró Pé-de-Serra Callejero no Rio de Janeiro: entre tradiciones e hibridaciones culturales*

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herschmannmm@gmail.com**Abstract**

Following the trails of the actors of Rio de Janeiro's street forró pé-de-serra throughout 2024 and 2025, we analyzed the partial results from empirical work carried out within this musical circuit. This involved field observations, interviews, informal conversations, and monitoring of posts and articles published in traditional media and social networks. Our corpographic and cartographic approach sought to rethink the relevance of musical activities performed in person, especially in public spaces by artists and collectives – in sonic-musical territorialities that gravitate around regularly held shows and dances – which promote relevant processes of urban re-signification in everyday life. In short, we sought to evaluate how these initiatives, also marked by the centrality of dance performances, have been contributing to transforming these locations into more plural and socially inclusive environments.

Keywords: Communication; Urban Culture; Music; Politics; Tradition.**Resumo**

Seguindo os rastros dos atores do forró pé-de-serra de rua carioca ao longo de 2024 e 2025, analisou-se os resultados parciais provenientes do trabalho empírico realizado junto a este circuito musical e que envolveu a realização de observações de campo, entrevistas, conversas informais e acompanhamento das postagens e matérias divulgadas nos meios de comunicação tradicionais e redes sociais. Na nossa abordagem corpográfica e cartográfica buscou repensar a relevância das atividades musicais realizadas presencialmente, especialmente em espaços públicos por artistas e coletivos – em territorialidades sônico-musicais que gravitam em torno de shows e bailes realizados regularmente –, os quais promovem processos de ressignificação urbana relevantes no cotidiano. Em suma, procuramos avaliar de que maneira essas iniciativas marcadas também pela centralidade das performances de dança vêm colaborando para transformar essas localidades em ambientes mais plurais e socialmente inclusivos.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação; Cultura Urbana; Música; Política; Tradição.

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Resumen

Siguiendo la pista de los actores del forró pé-de-serra callejero de Río de Janeiro a lo largo de 2024 y 2025, analizamos los resultados parciales del trabajo empírico realizado en este circuito musical. Esto implicó observaciones de campo, entrevistas, conversaciones informales y el seguimiento de publicaciones y artículos en medios tradicionales y redes sociales. Nuestro enfoque corpográfico y cartográfico buscó repensar la relevancia de las actividades musicales realizadas en persona, especialmente en espacios públicos por artistas y colectivos —en territorialidades sonoro-musicales que gravitan en torno a espectáculos y danzas regulares— que promueven procesos relevantes de resignificación urbana en la vida cotidiana. En resumen, buscamos evaluar cómo estas iniciativas, también marcadas por la centralidad de las presentaciones de danza, han contribuido a transformar estos lugares en entornos más plurales y socialmente inclusivos.

Palabras clave: Comunicación; Cultura Urbana; Música; Política; Tradición.

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1. Introduction

The analytical endeavor of studying musical and sonic practices that permeate and act as a dynamic, transformative force within the daily rhythm of cities has consistently served as the guiding leitmotif for our research over recent years. By diligently tracking the evolving trajectories and diverse performances of numerous actors across the expansive urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro, we have distinctly identified the resonant sonic-musical experience of *forró*, which persistently claims and occupies the city's streets throughout the calendar year. What strikingly emerged during our sustained interactions with the various stakeholders embedded within this particular musical and dance practice was the revelation that the attentive listening and active performance of this genre did not merely establish itself as a profoundly significant social experience within the city's daily life. Far beyond this, it manifested as a sophisticated mode of communication, an inherent socio-communicational *elan* that is vividly showcased through the recurrent formation of exceptionally potent “sonic-musical territorialities” (HERSCHMANN and FERNANDES, 2014).

Consequently, the central aim of this article is to critically re-evaluate the far-reaching consequences stemming from the construction of these intricate “multiterritorialities” (HAESBAERT, 2010). These territorialities coalesce and gravitate around what is commonly referred to as the “scene” (STRAW, 1991) or “circuit” (HERSCHMANN, 2013) of Rio's street *forró pé-de-serra*. This scene is notably punctuated by a series of significant weekly micro-events, which serve as crucial reference points: specifically, the *Forró de Rabeca*, *Forró na Praça*, and *Forró da Ouvidor*. While it is acknowledged that other relevant and similar street circles and dance gatherings can be identified throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro, this particular research, conducted meticulously across 2024 and 2025¹, intentionally concentrated on these three aforementioned events. This focused approach was adopted considering their established regularity, their capacity to engender pertinent controversies involving the actors within this “root musical universe”², and importantly, their strategic occupation of central and/or vital circulation areas within this bustling metropolis.

It is imperative to underscore that the primary intention here is not to meticulously (re)construct the exhaustive historical trajectory of *forró*³ itself. This is largely due to the existence of an extensive and rich specialized literature that, over the past decades, has dedicated considerable scholarly attention to this very task, meticulously emphasizing its myriad social, historical, market-related, and musical dimensions (ALBUQUERQUE JUNIOR, 2003; ALFONSI, 2007; DA SILVA, 2022; DE OLIVEIRA SANTOS, 2012; FEITOSA, 2008; SANTANA and DIAS, 2021; SILVA, 2003; TROTTA, 2014; TROTTA and MONTEIRO, 2008).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the specific decision to investigate this particular “root” (PEREIRA, 2003) street musical circuit organically arose from our personal practices of urban wandering, or “*derivás*,” through the vibrant streets of Rio de Janeiro. This corpographic and cartographic methodological approach – a consistent framework we have successfully employed in our research for over a decade – ultimately guided us directly to the Street *Forró pé-de-serra* of Rio. We contextualize this phenomenon as an integral part of the

¹ In addition to a review of the specialized literature, during this period not only were systematic field observations carried out at the three events mentioned, but also fifteen semi-structured interviews with musicians, dance teachers, attendees of the dances, cultural producers, and leaders of the Rio de Janeiro street *forró pé-de-serra* circuit.

² Regarding the dynamics employed by actors in traditional music scenes, Pereira states that, in general, they seek to establish a strong link with the past, which would be based on a set of musical foundations, aesthetic treatments, and constructed affectivities. For the actors of this traditional scene, establishing affiliation with a certain tradition is fundamental; it is crucial for constructing the idea of authenticity and legitimacy in this type of cultural universe. However, the author emphasizes that despite conservatism, cultural hybridizations and updates still occur, generating tension among the actors of the scene over the years (Pereira, 2003).

³ Regarding the dynamics undertaken by the actors in the scenes of traditional music, Pereira states that, in general, they seek to establish a strong link with the past, which would be based on a set of musical foundations, aesthetic treatments, and constructed affectivities. For the actors of this traditional scene, establishing affiliation with a certain tradition is fundamental; it would be crucial for the construction of the idea of authenticity and legitimacy in this type of cultural universe. However, the author emphasizes that despite conservatism, hybridizations and cultural updates still occur, generating tension among the actors of the scene over the years (Pereira, 2003). Among the various explanations for the emergence of the term *forró*, there is the interpretation of the folklorist Câmara Cascudo (1972), who considers the term an abbreviation of the word of Bantu origin *forrobodó*, which during the 19th century was used as a synonym for party, dance, mess, events frequented by people considered to be poorly educated. This understanding is also ratified by Alves (2007), who states that after the Proclamation of the Republic in the country, the term *forrobodó* or *forró* began to appear in dictionaries with the meaning of “dance of the rabble”. These studies indicate the origin of the term *forró* as a festive environment, frequented by people from less privileged segments, victims of social prejudice, where various Northeastern rhythms were played. In this same perspective, Silva (2005) presents *forró* in its pioneering meaning, as dance parties linked to popular segments, especially as leisure activities after intense workdays. Therefore, it is emphasized here that the use of the term *forró* initially served to designate a type of party, and was not directly associated with a specific musical genre or dance style, as it later came to be characterized (and associated with the works of canonical artists, such as Luiz Gonzaga, Dominginhos and Jackson do Pandeiro, among others) after its tradition was “reinvented” (HOBSBAWN and RANGER, 1984). It thus came to be characterized (and associated with the works of canonical artists, such as Luiz Gonzaga, Dominginhos and Jackson do Pandeiro, among others).



broader manifestations of the “(in)visible musical cities” (HERSCHMANN et al., 2024). Building upon this, and incorporating corpographic⁴ field research (JACQUES, 2012), we systematically tracked the intricate paths and interconnections of both human and non-human actors in their various associations. Our primary theoretical and methodological compass for this endeavor was the Actor-Network Theory (LATOURETTE, 2012), which provided invaluable insights.

Throughout the field research focused on the Rio Forró Scene (conducted between 2024 and 2025), a compelling observation emerged: this unique musical and dance experience is dynamically rooted in complex and ongoing processes of “hybridization”⁵. This hybridization actively reconfigures and reshapes existing “ambiances” (FERNANDES et al., 2025) as it sensitively interacts with, and is influenced by, the architectural landscape and the daily routines of the urban spaces where it is performed. Typically, in these celebratory gatherings, the musical groups (frequently performing in trios) employ traditional instruments such as the zabumba, sanfona (accordion), and triângulo (SILVA, 2003), imbuing the genre with a distinctive timbral quality (which often seamlessly incorporates the rhythms of Xote, Baião, and Xaxado). Concurrently, dance plays an immensely significant role within this scene. It is common to observe a diverse array of dance steps, ranging from fundamental movements (with simple variations) to the more elaborate “university style”⁶, characterized by intricate twists, vigorous spins, and variations that distinctly recall numerous Latin ballroom dance styles, where attendees consistently perform to a repertoire of songs that have achieved canonical status within this rich cultural universe. This includes not only compositions by highly acclaimed artists such as Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro, Dominginhos, Elba Ramalho, Sivuca, and Alceu Valença, but also works by groups that experienced substantial market success in the 1990s and early 2000s, like Forroçacana, Falamansa, and Circuladô de Fulô.

Despite having experienced occasional phases of national market expansion, the musical style known as “Forró pé-de-serra”⁷ – in stark contrast to Electronic Forró and Pisadinha (DE OLIVEIRA SANTOS, 2012; FEITOSA, 2008; SANTANA and DIAS, 2021; TROTTA, 2014) – has persistently maintained its presence as a resilient niche, consistently positioned “on the edges or outside the musical mainstream” (HERSCHMANN, 2011). The historical arrival of this genre in the Southeast region, and specifically in Rio de Janeiro⁸, is

⁴ The urban corpographies (and drifts) proposed here methodologically reinforce the central place of the body in the process of mapping the city, through which one can investigate the decisive role of body politics in carrying out a critical reading of the city. We emphasize the fact that the researcher-body is not just any body: it is a body marked by a localized and embodied knowledge-power. Under these conditions, we seek to interact with the diverse groups that interact in cities, always bearing in mind the risk of coloniality in the construction of research knowledge. Without losing sight of this condition, we understand that the act of corpographing the city’s spaces carries within it a double movement: on the one hand, the practice of following the traces through the city makes it possible to draw a complex, sensitive cartography of bodies; and, on the other hand, the practice of wandering, erring, drifting, or strolling is in itself a means of corpographing space. Thus, we immerse ourselves in the experience of the city in order to find and understand the meanings of practices and places through the act of wandering as a powerful reflective-methodological practice, which inserts the researcher’s body into interactions with the city (JACQUES, 2012; CARERI, 2013).

⁵ When analyzing the history of forró pé-de-serra – concerning both music and dance – Alfonsi suggests that it is possible to associate its plurality of styles with complex processes of “hybridization” (CANCLINI, 2006) that were renegotiated by the actors throughout the 20th century, going far beyond a stereotypical rural image generally associated with the genre. In a way, a forró pé-de-serra genre is constructed that articulates the style of university forró (established in the Southeast) with the more traditional forró, the latter being curiously related not only to the Northeast, but also to the dances of the village festivals of Itaúnas, located in the north of Espírito Santo (ALFONSI, 2007).

⁶ Regarding the success of university forró, especially in the Southeast region during the 1990s and 2000s, see SILVA, 2003.

⁷ The terms “pé-de-serra,” “roots,” or “traditional” gained visibility especially from the 1990s onwards with the emergence of other styles that became hugely successful in the national music market. In a way, from then on, a taxonomy based on the opposition between electronic and traditional music began to predominate in the debate. De Oliveira Santos challenges this type of simplification generated by a set of interpretations that leave out the complexity and various trends in the incorporation of musical elements (traditionally identified with Brega, Guitarrada, Sertanejo, Samba, Rock, Pop, etc.) that have been recurring over the decades in the rich universe of forró. According to this author, the engaged actors transformed these two antagonistic categories into discursive currents that provoked a growing bipolarization of the debate in the musical field. At one pole is “electronic forró,” whose proponents claim it to be “modern, current, and youthful” music; at the other pole is “traditional forró,” referenced primarily in the work of Luiz Gonzaga and associated with a “traditional” Northeast (linked to the past, not modern), defended as the “authentic forró”: “(...) such discursive opposition – anchored in different practices and identifications – has involved artists, musicians, sympathizers, audiences, journalists, and other intellectuals who have ended up taking positions in these trenches” (DE OLIVEIRA SANTOS, 2012, p. 676) which put progressive and conservative narratives in tension, which (re)negotiate in a more or less veiled way the representations full of hybridizations and updates, that is, which reinvent – with more or less success – the “traditions” (CANCLINI, 2006; HOBBSAWN and RANGER, 1984).

⁸ According to the actors, the forró scene in São Paulo is much more robust than the one in Rio de Janeiro. While São Paulo has a significant and regular program dedicated exclusively to traditional forró music (with highly successful nightclubs such as those in Canto da Ema and Remelexo Brasil), in Rio de Janeiro there is only the Centro de Tradições Nordestinas and some occasional programming at Clube Democráticos, the alternative space Forró da Glória, and Glorioso Cultural. Regarding the latter venue, Miriam Barbosa, the owner, makes some relevant comments: “(...) I think there is still a gap to be filled in relation to forró in the city. At Glorioso Cultural, we have been holding several forró dances regularly for some years now. We have built a great partnership with the artists, and the events have attracted an older audience that already liked forró and, at the same time, a younger audience interested in learning about and getting more involved” (interview given by Miriam Barbosa, owner of the Glorioso Cultural venue, on March 18, 2025).

unequivocally linked to the broader context of migratory processes originating from Brazil's Northeast, which predominantly occurred throughout the last century (DA SILVA, 2022). In this sense, Tinhorão astutely observes that forró dances began to garner notable visibility in urban centers during the latter half of the 20th century. These gatherings functioned as inclusive spaces where music and dance converged, effectively offering a viable leisure alternative, particularly for the less economically privileged segments of the population:

Emerging during the second half of the 1950s, when the migration of Northeasterners to Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Brasília had reached its peak, in the wake of the euphoric construction of the new capital and the real estate boom parallel to the industrial explosion in the central-south region, forrós constituted a curious example of accommodating interests and cultural expectations within the humblest strata of those cities (TINHORÃO, 2005, p. 199).

In our understanding, more than merely a musical genre or simply a type of popular party, Rio's forró constitutes a complex field of articulations, tensions, and disagreements (RANCIÈRE, 1996), echoing some of the dilemmas of this contemporary metropolis.

In light of this understanding, we systematically present throughout this scholarly work the partial results, which are firmly underpinned by the extensive empirical research we meticulously undertook. This research comprehensively involved the execution of dedicated fieldwork, the conduct of numerous in-depth interviews, engagement in informal conversations to capture candid insights, and the continuous monitoring of posts and articles that were disseminated across both traditional communication media and various social networks. We wish to emphatically highlight that the research delineated within this article constitutes but a segment of a broader, ongoing investigation. This larger project is formally affiliated with the PPGCOM (Postgraduate Programs in Communication) at both UFRJ (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and UERJ (State University of Rio de Janeiro). Generally speaking, this cartographic-oriented investigation is actively endeavoring to meticulously assess the profound importance of live musical activities, particularly when they are performed in public spaces by diverse artists and collectives. These activities, manifesting in the form of concerts, festive gatherings, and musical circles, profoundly re-signify the urban spaces of this city. In essence, we are seeking to evaluate their inherent capacity to contribute meaningfully to the transformation of these territories into more genuinely democratic spaces, characterized by enhanced levels of inclusion, pluralism, and robust social participation.

We have diligently sought to ascertain the specific ways in which musical repertoires, particularly those performed during the convivial happy hour period, can transcend their initial, often utilitarian, function of merely constituting “background music” (BILLET, 2024; STRAW, 2018). Our focus is on how they can evolve into powerful conduits through which actors not only realize potent and meaningful urban experiences but also, albeit sometimes precariously, facilitate the actualization of their fundamental “right to the city” (LEFEBVRE, 2015). Prior and ongoing research demonstrates how these distinct “ambiances” (FERNANDES et al., 2025) – due to their recurrent presence, the intensity of affects they evoke, the immense mobilization they inspire, their inherent plurality, and their widespread proliferation across diverse urban areas – have collectively generated significant and far-reaching effects throughout various parts of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Consequently, with specific reference to this current study – which involves closely observing the Rio forró scene, especially in the initiatives that occupy the streets of Flamengo, Glória, and the Center of this metropolis, and simultaneously conceptualizing a “cartography of controversies” in resonance with Actor-Network Theory (LATOUR, 2012) – our sustained effort has been to meticulously analyze the profound relevance of the “sonic-musical territorialities” (HERSCHMANN and FERNANDES, 2014 and 2023) and the “heterotopias” (HARVEY, 2004; FOUCAULT, 2013) erected by attendees at these events. These emergent spaces, in a nuanced manner, have effectively enabled the re-signification of this musical genre (which was initially and strongly identified with the deep-rooted traditions of the country's Northeast) within the collective imagination and daily life of this bustling city, particularly over the past three decades. By undertaking a comprehensive cartography of the corporal and musical performances, alongside the rich narratives and “fabulations” of the actors involved – with particular emphasis on appreciating their daily “tactics and cunning” (DE CERTEAU, 1994) – we found that they have collectively fostered the emergence of a revitalized local scene. This renewed scene is more deeply committed to the contemporary political agenda of marginalized minorities within the city, actively bringing to the forefront



highly pertinent structural violences. These violences are intimately linked to ongoing contestations concerning gender, race, cultural and sexual pluralism, and, in a broader sense, to critical debates surrounding the rights of access to the vibrant cultural life of the urban environment.

2. Mapping some of the controversies in this local scene

As we diligently follow the diverse “actors” (LATOUR, 2012) within this dynamic milieu, a compelling array of relevant controversies distinctly surfaces within this street and traditionally-rooted musical scene of the city. This complex context compels us to assert that this particular musical universe consistently oscillates between a profound commitment to its cherished traditions and an undeniable, often pressing, need to initiate and embrace certain changes. This inherent tension has, in turn, given rise to intricate processes of cultural hybridizations⁹, which serve to continuously refresh and update forró, adapting it to the contemporary temporal landscape and embedding it within the unique local culture. It is, of course, evident that some of these controversies are more readily discernible than others. We will proceed to analyze several of these compelling debates, drawing insights directly from testimonies meticulously gathered from local actors. These testimonies collectively point to: a) Tensions involving the musicians themselves and the inherent centrality of dance within the forró experience. b) Recurrent practices of machismo (male chauvinism) and homophobia, regrettably perpetuated by certain conservative segments of the audience; concurrently, however, we observe the significant emergence of a public that actively advocates for and demands the defense of an LGBTQIA+ agenda. c) Demands from female artists (encompassing not only white women, but also black women, Northeastern women, older women, non-binary individuals, etc.) who legitimately aspire to achieve greater visibility and secure more equitable space within the music market. d) Persistent difficulties in cultivating a renewal of audiences, particularly attracting younger demographic profiles. e) The notable challenges faced by burgeoning new musical groups in successfully introducing and establishing more original, authorial work within the competitive market of live music dances. f) And, finally, the pervasive difficulties in effectively overcoming the inherent seasonality of forró or in strategically promoting a broader expansion of the market specifically dedicated to this musical genre.

These issues represent just a selection among other equally relevant concerns that generate considerable mobilization among the various actors. Our prevailing hypothesis posits that the stakeholders within this scene find themselves in a peculiar impasse: they are caught in a constant oscillation between the insightful perception of the urgent necessity to foster greater hybridizations and a palpable fear of jeopardizing the already hard-won, albeit often precarious, sustainability they have achieved.

Thus, the profound dichotomy between tradition and innovation stands out as one of the most salient and frequently experienced tensions within the Rio forró scene. This tension is particularly palpable and actively lived out within the dance performances themselves, which unequivocally occupy a central and defining role in this musical landscape. To illustrate, Ian Pacheco, through his innovative proposition of an alternative methodology for his dance workshops, directly challenges established norms. He boldly introduces innovative movements and, notably, facilitates same-sex individuals dancing together, sometimes even blindfolded. His progressive dance class proposals have, predictably, generated some friction. On social media platforms, sharp criticisms from the more conservative factions within this scene are a frequent occurrence. Pacheco is often assailed with accusations of alleged “elitism” and, more drastically, of actively promoting the “end of forró and Northeastern culture.”

People accuse me of several things, including elitism (...). It's strange, because I often give classes for free, charge little, and even offer scholarships to my students (...). People need to understand that learning to dance is not just learning a set of predefined steps. This applies not only to forró dance. I find it strange when they say I don't teach forró, it makes me wonder about my teaching methodology (...). The contemporary forró I propose has as a fundamental principle the agenda of gender diversity and the deconstruction of machismo (...).¹⁰

⁹ Canclini proposes the concept of hybridization as a methodological positioning that would allow “(...) considering the intersections between cultures and establishing as the purpose of the work of the social sciences to situate themselves between cultures, in places of crossings, fusions, conflicts and contradictions” (CANCLINI, 2006, p. 8).

¹⁰ Check out the discussions in the posts available on the following Instagram: <<https://www.instagram.com/auladoian/>>, Accessed: June 6, 2025.



a) Conservatism and machismo still very present

Regarding the intricate difficulties encountered in confronting not only prevalent machismo but also pervasive homophobia within the sphere of forró dance – demands which increasingly resonate with an audience more attuned to the LGBTQIA+ agenda – it is crucial to acknowledge a complex reality. Despite the enduring resistance from more conservative sectors, a growing consensus among dance workshop instructors, cultural producers, and artists alike confirms that some truly significant shifts in the attitudes and postures of actors are, indeed, already manifesting in numerous dance events across the city. According to many of these informed individuals, the overarching objective is the conscious construction of an inclusive social environment; that is, the deliberate fostering of an atmosphere that is notably more welcoming and affirming, particularly for marginalized minorities. The subsequent testimonials offer valuable insights and provide tangible clues regarding this ongoing process of progressive opening and transformative change. Marie Nogueira, who co-organizes the “Oficina Forró de Rua” (Street Forró Workshop) alongside Rafinha Conceição, eloquently emphasizes that:

(...) Evidently, societal values are undergoing significant changes and are profoundly impacting the world of music and dance. It is absolutely essential to adapt to and, in some way, accompany this ongoing process. The newer generations are increasingly realizing that the traditional ‘lady and gentleman’ logic is no longer sufficient to encapsulate the richness and diversity that one could potentially experience within the dynamics of partner dancing. Of course, in contemporary society, many deeply ingrained sexist and homophobic issues still persist, and consequently, in partner dancing and within the world of forró, the situation is no different. Even numerous song lyrics that we frequently hear in classes often reinforce these outdated notions and are now being critically questioned by students. Some songs, despite their inherent machismo, continue to be played due to their historical significance within forró, and others are progressively being replaced in the repertoire because they fundamentally clash with the evolving values and urgent demands of current society. In the repertoire of our playlists, we conscientiously blend older, traditional songs with the innovative works of more contemporary musical groups (...). It is particularly important to emphasize that during our workshops, we intentionally create moments where participants dance in pairs, irrespective of their gender. We actively strive, in our classes, to cultivate an environment of profound acceptance and welcome for sexual minorities, ensuring that absolutely everyone feels comfortable and respected.¹¹

It is also highly pertinent to highlight that the pervasive issue of patriarchal violence is not exclusively challenged within the domain of dance. The more or less veiled sexism and machismo embedded within the lyrics of forró songs are also a matter of significant and growing concern for women who are actively involved in the scene. As Marcela Coelho, the talented accordionist of the “Forró Mulher” group, cogently suggests:

(...) in a general sense, explicit or subtly veiled gender violence regrettably appears with considerable frequency within song lyrics, and we, as a community, have been increasingly engaged in debating these critical issues. There are indeed songs that explicitly state, for instance, ‘I grabbed her hand and made her kiss me.’ I genuinely believe that for both the composers and the listening public, for a very long period, individuals simply did not pause to critically reflect on the implicit messages conveyed by what was being played at the dances. Today, however, the context is entirely different; issues of gender are firmly placed on the daily agenda for discussion and action. Consequently, if such content offends even one woman, it inherently offends all women. Therefore, the irrefutable fact is that it is simply no longer acceptable to sing various songs without question. Some songs, we even thoughtfully modify specific lyrical passages, and there are others that we have decisively removed from our repertoire altogether. As such, songs containing lyrics with heightened violence are already being systematically excluded from many forró parties, dances, and festivals.¹²

¹¹ Interview given by Marie Nogueira, organizer of the Forró de Rua Workshop, held on March 29, 2025.

¹² Interview given by Marcela Coelho, accordion player of the group Forró Mulher, conducted on June 10, 2025.



Furthermore, the alarmingly limited space historically allocated to female artists within this scene is also increasingly becoming a subject of intense scrutiny and questioning. Indeed, an intersectional concern has notably emerged, encompassing critical issues such as racial identity, sexual orientation, regional background, and even ageism. The accomplished musician Marcela Coelho emphatically states that:

(...) it remains exceedingly difficult to navigate and confront machismo, and this challenge is particularly pronounced within the professional sphere. It is, undeniably, a space that we are compelled to reinvent on a daily basis, constantly advocating for greater and more equitable space for women. If one were to critically examine festivals, for example, by scrutinizing various lineups, one would invariably ascertain that there is, at best, a solitary band composed of women. Even in such instances, their inclusion often appears to be a mere token gesture, implemented solely to provide a facade of representation, so as not to be accused of entirely excluding women (...). The current scenario continues to be deeply concerning, especially when one considers the ever-growing number of female artists who are valiantly striving and fighting for their rightful space within the competitive musical market (...). Encouragingly, several groups prominently led by women are progressively emerging within the city of Rio de Janeiro. Notable examples include Tocaia and Luz de Candeeiro, which are exclusively dedicated to instrumental music. A multitude of new, high-quality groups have also appeared: Flor de Manacá, Flor de Caroá, and Forró das Maravilhas (...). I personally participate in forró groups that are specifically tailored to cater to an LGBTQIA+ audience. We consistently observe that this particular audience distinctly feels more at ease and comfortable in these types of events, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and enabling them to socialize more freely. In more traditional forró environments, for instance, when non-binary and trans couples are present, complicated and often distressing situations can regrettably arise, primarily because many people simply refuse to accept their presence there (...). I perceive that within our network there is a very pronounced concern dedicated to actively promoting inclusion. That is to say, there exists a profound desire for an ever-increasing number of women to be present and to fully enjoy and benefit from that shared space. (...) we have consistently committed ourselves to being able to feature not only a greater diversity of instrumentalists across varied age groups, but also to prominently include more black artists and artists hailing from other states, particularly from the Northeast region of Brazil. This concerted effort generates a rich and invaluable environment of cultural exchange.¹³

b) Centrality of dance performances

As previously highlighted, within this intricate web of controversies, one of the most defining and distinctive features of the forró scene, including its manifestation in Rio de Janeiro, is the undeniable primacy of dance performances. The act of dancing is not merely a component; it is central to the very essence of the experience. In their testimonies, the involved actors consistently underscore that dance is not just important, but the fundamental reason for forró's sustained success and continued existence. They not only emphasize this centrality but also keenly point out that the tactile experience of dancing closely with another person introduces numerous challenges, particularly concerning the imperative to respect the other's body (given the intimate proximity). Consequently, this necessitates a proactive and persistent effort to combat the frequent practices of harassment that, unfortunately, can occur within the sonic-musical events of this street circuit. Among various relevant movements that have garnered significant social mobilization, we notably highlight "Forró sem Assédio" (Forró Without Harassment)¹⁴, a crucial initiative explicitly mentioned by Marcela Coelho:

(...) there is a substantial degree of closeness inherent in forró dancing, and therefore, it is absolutely essential for individuals who are dancing to clearly understand that it is, purely and simply, just a dance. There needs to be a fundamental comprehension that, in principle, there is no implied 'yes' for anything beyond the scope of the dance

¹³ *Idem.*

¹⁴ For more details see the website at the following link: <<https://www.instagram.com/forrosemassedio>>, accessed: October 10, 2025.



itself. There is a profoundly important movement in Rio de Janeiro called ‘Forró Sem Assédio,’ which specifically addresses these very themes; indeed, there is a great deal of vital debate surrounding this on social media. Event producers and musicians are also highly mobilized and committed to contributing to the broader amplification of public awareness regarding this issue.¹⁵

Igor Conde, the coordinator of the Caramuela collective and carnival block, further corroborates and reiterates this dynamic, articulating that:

In the more alternative forró scene, which I am actively involved in, many participants generally adhere to a more progressive ideology. Simultaneously, there’s an intense and ongoing debate among both fans and regular attendees. Nowadays, harassment during dance, which regrettably was a rather common occurrence at parties in the past, is far less tolerated. Currently, active movements and public denunciations are commonplace, as it is becoming increasingly evident that a significant number of people who attend these events are solely there with the objective of dancing, and not necessarily with the intention of engaging in romantic advances or flirtation (...). Even the forró of the 1990s and 2000s, while experiencing a boom, did so within a societal context where machismo and misogyny were unfortunately more widely tolerated (...); lamentably, there was also a pervasive presence of homophobia. Today, however, a substantial portion of attendees and cultural producers are actively confronting these issues head-on (...). In that era, the sight of two men dancing was often met with ridicule or could even provoke aggression. Even presently, we encounter more conservative strongholds, such as the dances at Democráticos or the São Cristóvão fair, where non-binary couples may still unfortunately experience some form of violence. In the initiatives that our network organizes, we unequivocally inform the public that we have zero tolerance for harassment or homophobia. In our promotional materials, we explicitly notify producers and influencers that LGBTQIA+ audiences are enthusiastically welcomed at these events, and that we are staunch advocates for diversity and social inclusion.¹⁶

Therefore, the pervasive relevance of dance classes offered in specialized academies, in various locales across the city, and through expedited crash courses frequently provided at the commencement of diverse forró dance events, all emphatically underscore the profound importance of the dance experience for individuals to achieve full immersion within the scene. Intriguingly, the musicians who form the backbone of this street forró circuit frequently encounter a peculiar paradox: while they are undeniably fundamental to the overall experience, they are often perceived by attendees merely as instrumentalists contributing to the dance or, at times, as simple (re)producers of “background music” (BILLET, 2024). To safeguard their precarious sustainability, they often find themselves accepting this role, even though it may evoke a degree of discomfort. On this very matter, João Márcio, the diligent organizer behind the Forró da Praça and Forró da Ouvidor dance events, firmly contends that:

(...) naturally, artists possess a certain vanity, and genuine recognition and heartfelt applause are of significant importance. Nevertheless, the musicians performing at these dances are fundamentally there to cater to the audience’s enjoyment, rather than exclusively pursuing their own artistic expression. We are acutely aware that the public desires to dance to a repertoire primarily composed of the well-loved hits of forró pé-de-serra. Of course, we occasionally present some original compositions, and the audience typically responds very positively (...). Evidently, this arrangement does not, in any way, impede artists from injecting their creativity into the musical arrangements and interpretations. But our primary role there is for the dance; consequently, without a substantial dancing audience, the entire endeavor simply ceases to exist (...). Therefore, there is genuinely no sense of rivalry or jealousy on the part of the musicians, because everything is truly magnificent when this harmonious synergy is cultivated between the musical groups and

¹⁵ Interview given by Marcela Coelho, accordion player of the group Forró Mulher, conducted on June 10, 2025.

¹⁶ Interview given by Igor Conde, coordinator of the Caramuela collective and group, conducted on March 5, 2025.



the enthusiastic dancing public that attends the events. The Forró Pé-de-Serra musician is fully conscious of their role as a dance musician in that specific context. That particular dance event only thrives and exists when people are dancing happily; otherwise, the event cannot endure. It goes without saying that for renowned artists like Mestrinho, Mariana Aydar, or Elba Ramalho, the dynamic is entirely different: these more established artists operate on a distinct and elevated level.¹⁷

Daniel Souto, the organizer of Forró de Rabeca, draws critical attention to a salient reality:

Unfortunately, if a musical group performing at a dance or forró circle, whether held in enclosed venues or in public street spaces, were to primarily prioritize its original, authorial work, it is highly probable that attendance would be sparse. In practice, virtually no one adopts this strategy. What is generally programmed for these events is a creative approach to a repertoire consisting of approximately 50 established, widely recognized songs, which the audience universally desires to hear and dance to. That is, it has become a business where the dynamic is inverted: it is easily observable that it is the public that dictates to the artists precisely what the groups will inevitably perform. More original, authorial work does exist, but it makes rare appearances, typically showcased at competitive festivals, on streaming platforms like Spotify, or during very specific, niche events.¹⁸

c) Market limitations of the Rio forró circuit

Concerning the operational dynamics, particularly within the street forró circuit, the following testimonials provide remarkably clear and insightful perspectives. The economic sustainability of this scene is demonstrably precarious, largely dependent on voluntary contributions collected via “hats” (which have largely modernized to electronic forms, utilizing payment platforms like PIX and QR Code dissemination at events) and public grants. It is not consistently feasible to rely on local merchants and street vendors for their active collaboration or financial support for these events. The actors involved generally underscore their deliberate choice of locations that are pleasant, easily accessible for public circulation, and their strategic scheduling during more convenient hours, typically after work (often coinciding with the happy hour period). For these organizers, the ambient music performed on the street primarily functions as a sort of “showcase” or public display. Through this approach, their overarching aim is to cultivate new audiences and to secure bookings for other events held in enclosed venues, where predetermined fees are established. This strategy is eloquently attested in the subsequent testimonials:

In addition to Forró da Praça, I previously initiated a project called Forró da Ouvidor, which also functions as a forró pé-de-serra event. This event used to take place on the pedestrianized Mercado street, where I have recently resumed organizing it. Forró da Praça (situated in São Salvador) is held on Fridays, and Forró da Ouvidor takes place on Thursdays. Furthermore, I strategically leverage Forró da Praça as a recognized brand, particularly because I also coordinate non-regular, itinerant events. The chosen location for the dance is profoundly important: it must be inherently pleasant and facilitate easy public circulation (...). I frequently encounter considerable bureaucratic hurdles and a regrettable lack of understanding from law enforcement agencies, yet I have successfully organized dances in various other locations, including Arpoador, Praça General Osório, Largo do Machado, and Largo da Glória. My core intention is to ensure that art and culture are appropriately valued and accorded their rightful place, which can certainly be found in public streets. These public spaces play a crucial role in democratizing access to cultural experiences. I have always meticulously adhered to public regulations, and all our events operate with the necessary permits and rely on voluntary ‘hat’ contributions. These street events, particularly during the happy hour period, serve as an invaluable

¹⁷ Interview given by João Márcio, organizer of the Forró da Praça and Forró da Ouvidor dances, conducted on June 24, 2025.

¹⁸ Interview given by Daniel Souto, organizer of the Forró de Rabeca event, held on March 27, 2025.



‘showcase’ for our network, directly leading to invitations we receive to perform with my musical groups, Alambique de Barro and Carcará Groove (...). I must say that my involvement initially began through dance; that’s what seduced me into wanting to be part of the forró pé-de-serra universe. I was actively involved in cultural events related to ballroom dancing and carnival: gradually, I began to fully comprehend the intricate complexity involved in drawing people to musical events and the profound relevance of actively occupying public spaces. These dance events are fundamentally socializing occasions and hold immense significance for the cultural vitality of the city (...). Forró possesses substantial growth potential and commands a significant market presence. Generally, we successfully gather between 500 and 800 individuals at the majority of the events we organize (...). In addition to coordinating street dances and performing with my two musical groups at various events, I also collaboratively produce, in partnership with other colleagues, the Forró do Catete and the Forró da Glória.¹⁹

Cultural producers frequently lament the specific difficulty they face in forging effective partnerships with street vendors and hawkers:

The collaborative relationship with street vendors is quite complicated: in practical terms, they rarely contribute financially through fixed fees. Both at Forró da Ouvidor and Forró da Praça, there is almost a complete absence of financial support from partners. What sustains us is the ‘hat’ (chapéu), now predominantly electronic, which functions exceptionally well. Out of events that typically mobilize an average of 500 attendees, we estimate that approximately 300 contribute something. While it may not constitute the ideal fee, on many evenings, it amounts to a respectable remuneration. Our events intentionally do not feature any physical barriers in public spaces, nor on the sidewalks of squares and bars; everything is entirely free access. We diligently strive to build and promote our brand through these events, which effectively serve as showcases and are instrumental in cultivating our audience. Due to the undeniable success of these dance gatherings, we have received numerous invitations to participate in many prestigious events that do offer established fees. We have proudly taken part in three editions of the Northeast Festival, performed at shows at Marina da Glória, Arraial do Cardoso, Quintal da Lapa, and various other events throughout Rio de Janeiro (...). It is, of course, clear that Rio’s forró market cannot be compared to that of São Paulo. In São Paulo, for instance, there exists something that is notably absent here in Rio: two substantial nightclubs, specifically Canto da Ema and Remelexo Brasil, both of which are entirely dedicated to offering an intense and regular program of forró. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, we currently possess only the Centro de Tradições Nordestinas (Northeastern Traditions Center). This is remarkably insufficient for a musical genre that holds such profound importance for the cultural life of the entire country.²⁰

The notable predominance and continuous reproduction of a traditional repertoire – comprising approximately 50 songs that have achieved canonical status within this scene – coupled with a distinct scarcity of original, authorial work, are unequivocally evident. According to Paulo Afonso, who is responsible for organizing the “Agenda Forró no Rio” (<https://www.instagram.com/forronorio>), this constitutes a recurring strategy. On one hand, this approach provides a measure of sustainability for artists and cultural producers; however, on the other hand, it undeniably impedes the broader expansion of this scene’s market.

From the perspective of both artists and the public, it is consistently important to honor tradition and history, celebrating the enduring works of the great older and widely recognized composers (...). The artists and producers of these events almost invariably aim to curate and present a creative remix of this established repertoire. So, while tradition is deeply valued, it is equally clear that if there isn’t a continuous influx of more original,

¹⁹ Interview given by João Márcio, organizer of the Forró da Praça and Forró da Ouvidor dances, conducted on June 24, 2025.

²⁰ *Idem*.



authorial music, achieving significant growth becomes immensely challenging. Many individuals actively involved in the scene firmly believe that original work is absolutely essential for evolution, but regrettably, very little original material successfully integrates into the enshrined repertoire (...). The festival held annually in Itaúnas attempts to fulfill this crucial role: it is a competitive festival that has been running for over two decades, exclusively featuring songs that have never been previously released. Here in Rio de Janeiro, I have organized the ‘Forró no Rio Festival’ for the past two years, and it includes original music as one of its competitive categories. I also endeavor to assist with promotion, by making this music available on Spotify and actively publicizing it on my social media page. Marimelo, for instance, stands as one of the most prominent artists we have here in Rio, and she boasts original music, but lamentably, the majority of the public remains unaware of it (...). I specifically created the Spotify page solely for hosting these award-winning songs, but often, due to time constraints, I lack the capacity to update and invest more in it. I firmly believe that original music represents an incredibly important pathway to foster the growth of the scene. After all, artists like Mariana Aydar, Mestrinho, and the group Ó do Forró achieved national prominence precisely because of their original work. Frequently, artists possess charisma and musical talent, but merely reproducing the repertoire ultimately reveals itself to be a strategy with very clear limitations – both in the medium and long term (...). The truly significant news is that, starting this year, we will be hosting a stage of FENFIT right here in Rio de Janeiro. I am confident that this initiative will be instrumental in enabling the local scene, in the foreseeable future, to develop substantially in various ways. We are constantly hoping for a group akin to Falamansa or Forroçacana to achieve widespread popularity and go viral, thereby generating positive repercussions for our market. The practitioners of electronic forró and Pisadinha from the Northeast adeptly utilize platforms like TikTok and various other applications, integrating elements from Pop and Sertanejo: their overarching artistic proposition is different (...), but the undeniable fact is that they command a highly expressive and potent market.²¹

This current situation of stagnation and impasse in Rio starkly contrasts with the dynamic experiences of cultural producers within the Northeastern forró scene. It is readily apparent that the latter definitively broke away from the rigid strictures of traditional forró pé-de-serra many decades ago. They have achieved immense success with Electronic Forró, and subsequently, experienced significant triumph with Pisadinha, particularly resonating with a more massive market that centers on large-scale live concerts.²² It is not difficult to discern that the palpable fear of being delegitimized by the public (and the passionately involved fan networks) when attempting innovation, coupled with the ingrained need to convincingly demonstrate engagement with “root” manifestations of Northeastern identity, is fundamentally crucial for safeguarding a certain “symbolic capital.” This capital, at times, inadvertently ensnares musicians in the Southeast, making them apprehensive of embracing “cultural hybridizations” (CANCLINI, 2006) and engaging in more fervent debates about potential alterations to these cherished traditions (HOBSBAWN and RANGER, 1984). Nevertheless, it is evident that updates and subtle transformations are indeed occurring within this traditional scene, albeit in a more disguised and less overt manner. This phenomenon is subtly suggested by the testimony below from musician Daniel Souto, the organizer of Forró da Rabeca, which regularly takes place weekly at Banca do André.

I must confess that I was once much more firmly rooted in musical traditions. After all, forró is inherently a tradition of the Northeast, and while Rio de Janeiro undoubtedly boasts a profound Northeastern influence, it is crucial to bear in mind that it is not, strictly speaking, a native Carioca or Southeast tradition. Consequently, throughout my musical journey, I made a conscious effort to immerse myself in and learn this tradition from the most experienced masters (...). Today, my perspective has evolved significantly; we actively propose the integration of other rhythms and instruments, such as the rabeca and cavaquinho. And, often, we are fully aware that we are venturing beyond the established

²¹ Interview given by Paulo Afonso, cultural producer and coordinator of the Forró Agenda in Rio, conducted on March 31, 2025.

²² Regarding the market that expanded even further in the 1990s with the success of bands such as Mestrinho de Leite, Aviões do Forró, Calcinha Preta, Wesley Safadão and others – and which would later be called Electronic Forró and, subsequently, Pisadinha – see the following bibliography: SANTANA and DIAS, 2021; TROTТА, 2014; TROTТА and MONTEIRO, 2008.

musical boundaries of the forró pé-de-serra universe. Therefore, it is imperative to understand that what we are currently performing is no longer precisely a traditional forró.²³

There is a discernible and concerted effort on the part of the actors to strategically expand the local forró market by directly addressing the critical issue of visibility. This is being largely achieved through the extensive and deliberate employment of social media platforms. The perceived lack of a more robust and effective presence in more traditional communication media is also widely regarded as a significant impediment. As Paulo Afonso, cultural producer and coordinator of “Agenda Forró no Rio,” clearly articulates:

In 2018, I embarked on the journey of developing and making available online certain information, which was initially branded as ‘Forró pra Você.’ Several years later, I rebranded it to ‘Forró no Rio’ (...). The foundational idea behind this initiative has consistently been to provide comprehensive information for individuals who were eager to discover where forró cultural activities were taking place within the city (...). It is important to clarify that maintaining the page incurs a substantial monthly cost. This includes expenses for various applications, and compensation for individuals who contribute by submitting information to the page. There are also the costs associated with my own travel to cover the events. It became absolutely necessary to devise a sustainable method for the page to continue its operations. We typically request a contribution from anyone who desires a prominent highlight for their event or wishes to promote a workshop or class. Additionally, there is the ‘Forró Pass’ page (<https://uticket.com.br/forropass>), which I specifically created to facilitate prize draws and also to sell tickets. All these diverse approaches serve as avenues to monetize and ensure the viability of this platform, which plays a pivotal role in granting visibility to this local forró pé-de-serra scene. In-person events consistently attract between 300 and 800 attendees, often comprising a highly loyal audience. However, simultaneously, we observe that this public is intensely eager for more detailed information about the forró scene, which they often do not fully comprehend. We proudly boast over 50,000 followers, and our page also offers complimentary tickets to forró events: this strategy significantly aids in publicizing the initiatives of cultural producers and artists, and concurrently, promotes the overall event schedule itself. We meticulously provide comments, photographs, and concise video clips that enable the public to gain a clear understanding of the event’s proposition, its venue, and the general ambiance they can anticipate encountering.²⁴

Furthermore, our observations indicate that the forró scene in Rio predominantly engages an audience aged between 30 and 50 years old. This implies a noticeable scarcity of adolescents and young adults in their twenties. However, some insightful artists and cultural producers firmly believe that a younger demographic is, in fact, increasingly showing interest in forró. Their compelling testimonies suggest that the prevalent caution displayed by established actors in innovating and in fully embracing the progressive agenda of marginalized minorities (such as the LGBTQIA+ community) is actively perceived as a significant impediment to more intensely attracting these newer generations. According to Daniel Souto, the coordinator of Forró de Rabeca:

(...) there are indeed distinct audiences keenly interested in forró. Certainly, there is the traditional forró circuit audience, which tends to be more conservative, resistant to change, and primarily seeks to experience the dance with the most widely known songs and with pairs formed by gentlemen and ladies. In fact, this particular segment of the audience often exclusively prefers trios and actively rejects quartets or the inclusion of what they term ‘alien’ instruments, such as the cavaquinho (...). And then, there are these emerging new audiences, who are particularly drawn to street forró. These individuals frequent events like Forró da Glória, Forró da Taylor, Forró da Ouvidor, Forró da Praça, and Forró da Rabeca, all of which exhibit a distinct profile, likely somewhat more progressive. It is

²³ Interview given by Daniel Souto, coordinator of the Forró de Rabeca group, conducted on March 27, 2025.

²⁴ Interview given by Paulo Afonso, cultural producer and coordinator of the Forró Agenda in Rio, conducted on March 31, 2025.



a younger demographic that actively participates in these more alternative forró pé-de-serra events. I believe that these young people are deeply mobilized by the immersive and engaging experience of the intimate proximity inherent in this type of dance. Subsequently, over time, they begin to discover and are equally captivated by this musical genre itself. This is an audience that is notably more aligned with a minority agenda and, which often, clashes with this more conservative audience at the dances.²⁵

The compelling case of the Caramuela collective, which consistently offers workshops and orchestrates a street carnival forró block year-round, powerfully suggests an alternative pathway. This path is crucial not only for solidifying the transcendence of forró's traditional seasonality but also for strategically broadening the public that consumes forró within the city.

I was already an ardent fan and a dedicated reveler of Carnival; I have always harbored a deep affection for the festivities. However, I later came to fully comprehend that Carnival also functions as an immense showcase. It allows you to prominently display yourself to everyone, and with significant impact. I strategically began utilizing Carnival to amplify my branding and to directly address the potential limitations inherent in the forró market, which was historically confined to the June festivities circuit. I eventually departed from Terreirada, a block I had organized with Geraldo Junior, which focused on Cariri culture, and subsequently established the Caramuela block. This is a forró block that parades through the city streets during Carnival. I founded Caramuela in 2018 as a workshop, which only truly gained momentum after the Covid pandemic. These workshops have proven to be exceptionally important in galvanizing and empowering the collective set of initiatives. We offer workshops in percussion, string instruments, and wind instruments, and later, we expanded to also offer dance workshops to the public (...). The workshops are conducted weekly and have consistently attracted a large and enthusiastic following. Initially, they were hosted at Armazém do Campo, and subsequently, they transitioned to being held at the larger venue of Fundação Progresso (...). Caramuela operates as a collective that manages two distinct modules of work programming, structured according to the following plan: a first module, spanning from March to August, is specifically oriented towards the São João parties and festivities; and a second module, from September to February, is strategically directed towards the street carnival period.²⁶

The insightful testimonies gathered from attendees at the forró circles and dances during the ongoing research unequivocally suggest that a variety of diverse strategies have proven instrumental in attracting different segments of the public. These successful approaches include: providing a greater number of free street events, strategically scheduled during happy hour and situated in easily accessible areas of the city; actively fostering the creation of a more welcoming and fundamentally safe environment, particularly for marginalized minorities; increasing the availability of dance workshops; and ensuring greater visibility and comprehensive information disseminated across social media platforms regarding these events.

Typically, I head to Praça São Salvador after work. I simply must find some forró to satisfy my addiction, as I absolutely adore the steps of University Forró that I diligently learned back in the 90s (...). I discovered the 'Forró no Rio' page, which has been incredibly helpful to me, providing invaluable information to meticulously organize my weekly cultural agenda. I reside in Glória, but regrettably, we no longer have the Forró do Largo da Glória [which was recently closed down by the municipal government] (...). Therefore, Forró da Praça (located in São Salvador), which is not far from my home, offers a truly wonderful and accessible street dance experience. This is precisely why I have started coming here with considerable frequency.²⁷

²⁵ Interview given by Daniel Souto, coordinator of the Forró de Rabeca group, conducted on March 27, 2025.

²⁶ Interview given by Igor Conde, coordinator of the Caramuela collective and group, conducted on March 5, 2025.

²⁷ Interview given by Gilberto Silva, a regular at Forró da Praça, conducted on June 20, 2025.



My partner and I live quite close by, and we absolutely adore coming here on Fridays because there's always a wonderful crowd, and the street becomes wonderfully vibrant and full of life. We love seeing the square bustling and coming here to dance a little forró (...). There's a particularly great aspect to this event. As a lesbian woman, I come with my girlfriend, and we have genuinely never encountered any situation that made us feel uncomfortable or self-conscious. So, this truly is a very welcoming environment; I feel incredibly at ease and happy at this dance.²⁸

Curiously enough, I first discovered the captivating world of forró during Carnival 2024, when I attended the Caramuela block. I have always been an enthusiastic participant in street blocks, and I found the seamless blend of carnival and forró absolutely sensational. The unique possibility of dancing in pairs during the carnival parades is also brilliant and is something that genuinely happens at this particular block. In fact, I even participated in some of Caramuela's music workshops (...). Nowadays, I regularly attend Forró da Ouvidor and Forró da Rabeca during happy hour, as they are conveniently located near my workplace, in the very heart of downtown Rio. The music, the dance, the people, and, in a broader sense, the entire atmosphere here are simply fantastic.²⁹

3. Conclusions

Much like other vibrant musical scenes that are progressively occupying and redefining urban spaces, the intricate relationship of forró within the Carioca (Rio de Janeiro) urban environment is unequivocally characterized not only by significant mobilization and fervent participation but also by inherent tensions and persistent difficulties in navigating the complexities of municipal bureaucracy. Cultural producers and artists frequently voice their frustrations regarding the arduous challenge of establishing meaningful partnerships with both private sector initiatives and public entities to successfully advance their projects. The sustained support from local merchants and entrepreneurs emerges as another profoundly relevant aspect in shaping and sustaining the forró circuit, particularly in the areas of Centro, Flamengo, and Glória. In this vein, the actors deeply involved in forró – embodying their “bodies in celebration” (FERNANDES et al., 2018) and operating “in alliance” (BUTLER, 2018) – have managed to construct a vibrant, albeit often “less visible” (HERSCHMANN et al., 2024), localized circuit within these areas. This is particularly noticeable during the happy hour period, with the consistent presence of weekly events such as Forró do Ouvidor (situated near Praça XV), Forró da Praça (in São Salvador), and Forró da Rabeca (at Banca do André, in Cinelândia).

These highly popular micro-events stand in stark contrast to the hyper-monetized programming typically associated with the “spectacularized mega-event city” (HERSCHMANN and FERNANDES, 2023). These smaller-scale circles and dances hold immense significance, not merely for their role in promoting social inclusion but also for offering vital cultural life options within the city, especially catering to less economically privileged segments of the population.

It can be confidently asserted that forró – despite operating on a relatively smaller scale – has consistently provided a safe and deeply sociable environment at its street events. Within this context, the actors ingeniously reinvent their cultural traditions and, in a profound way, reshape their daily lives, thereby generating dynamic “activist and re-existence” practices (FERNANDES et al., 2022) within the city. Consequently, the street forró pé-de-serra scene in Rio de Janeiro represents a particularly fertile ground for a nuanced understanding of the profound relevance of “sonic-musical territorialities” (HERSCHMANN and FERNANDES, 2014 and 2023) and the astute “tactics and cunning” (DE CERTEAU, 1994) that actors strategically employ to re-signify urban space. In doing so, they adeptly bring to the forefront – without ever entirely abandoning negotiations with the traditional pé-de-serra roots – contemporary and progressive issues encompassing gender, race, and sexual and cultural diversity. Far from being a culturally stagnant expression, forró finds itself at a pivotal “turning point” in the city of Rio, skillfully navigating the powerful force of tradition while simultaneously addressing the urgent need for greater modernization and the active promotion of enhanced social inclusion.

²⁸ Interview given by Gabriela Cardoso, a regular at Forró da Praça, conducted on June 20, 2025.

²⁹ Interview given by Julia Rangel, a regular at Forró da Ouvidor and Forró da Rabeca, conducted on March 19, 2025.



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