



Editorial / Editorial / Editorial

(Ethno)musicology, Neo-Liberalism and the Silence of Institutions

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In the last months, a series of political and economic changes of neoliberal character have been threatening several countries in Latin America. Although with certain differences, in Argentina and Brazil, the effects of those changes can already be appreciated: transference of resources to the most concentrated sectors of the economy, foreign currency flight, external indebtedness without development, increased dependence on financial and commercial centers, jobs loss, increased poverty, downsizing of the State in the areas of education, scientific research, health and social assistance, increased influence of the executive power on the administration of justice, etc. In many cases, the rulers carrying out these policies have been accused of being closely linked to multinational companies which benefit from the transformations that they themselves promote, of having foreign currency deposits in tax havens –as has been unveiled in the Panama Papers–, of having been investors in “vulture funds” –holdouts– which filed lawsuits against the State, and of having made fortunes through rendering not very transparent services to a State which now they control. None of this information is revealed in this editorial. In spite of the monopolization of the media, devoted to lying and distraction, which accompanies neoliberal policies, those interested in looking for evidence of the veracity of the preceding affirmations can find them in reliable journalistic and judicial sources.

In Latin America, research on music –in all its aspects– is funded by the State. If, exceptionally, it prospers in private institutions, it is because they usually directly or indirectly benefit from the State. It is not difficult to infer the consequences that the downsizing of the public sector has and will have on our field. Many colleagues have reacted promptly and have not hesitated to manifest their preoccupation publicly and to report budget cuts and dismissals. Their voices can be heard in the digital discussion lists (for example in those of the *Associação Brasileira de Etnomusicologia* and of the *Asociación Argentina de Musicología*) and in other media. There has also been participation of colleagues in demonstrations organized by musicians and artists from other disciplines, such as the *#OcupaMinc* movement in Brazil, which rose up in the defense of the Ministry of Culture and of other state agencies and programs. There has been unprecedented public repudiation expressed by associations which represent ethnomusicologists, as is the case of the *Associação Brasileira de Etnomusicologia*¹, and by others which, without being directly affected by the situation, have adopted a supportive

¹ <http://abetmusica.org.br/conteudo.php?&sys=noticias&id=119> [Web: July 2016].



position, such as the International Council for Traditional Music². Also, from other academic fields, preoccupation and repudiation have been expressed in several congresses (for example, see the open letter sent by the Executive secretary of the Latin American Council of Social Science to the Congress of the Latin American Studies Association). However, we should admit that, in the face of the neoliberal advance, many colleagues prefer to remain silent, whether it is for fear of losing their jobs, or because of empathy, or failure to see the destructive effects of the neoliberal policies, or agreement with them. Unfortunately, silence, whatever its reason may be, is not neutral or apolitical and in most cases it ends up being a concealed way of approval.

For those of us who are ready to speak out against the downsizing of the State, the situation demands solving two questions: what is it that we want to defend? And which role must institutions play in such defense beyond the individual actions carried out by each of its members? Undoubtedly, we want to protect job positions, subsidies for research, the continuity of congresses and publications, graduate or postgraduate educational centers and everything related to our discipline. But if we limit ourselves to protecting the interests of our disciplines, we will be adopting a corporative position, indifferent to the pauperization which other segments of society are suffering. A way of giving our disciplines a more important role is to replace the corporate attitude by an ethics of solidarity with an agenda including the defense of the wellbeing and rights of other social sectors, belonging or not to the areas of culture, education or research. The situation in Latin America demands such solidarity. It is also required in other places where xenophobia, violence and the growth of extreme rightwing movements foretell an adverse horizon for diversity and free thinking. The agenda which should lead our solidarity must come from a deep debate propitiated by the institutions which represent us, which must take over the responsibility of publicly expressing the denunciations and claims originated in such debate. Would it not be more honorable to be part of an institution which takes a stand in the face of the downsizing of the State, or of events such as the disappearance of the 43 Mexican students, the *#NiUnaMenos* movement in Argentina, or the situation of the refugees in Europe and Asia, than to belong to an institution dedicated only to organizing congresses, editing publications and disputing managerial positions?

² http://www.clacso.org.ar/difusion/mensaje_clacso_en_lasa_2016_golpe_en_brasil [Web: July 2016].