Associativism as the Condition of Musical Possibility for an Alternative Brass Band in Portugal: Innovation, Viability, and European Integration

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Abstract. Lisbon's alternative brass band Farra Fanfarra is part of a global network of musically eclectic, countercultural brass bands. Yet, the band also emerged from the country's *filarmónica* band tradition, which has been shown to play a prominent role in constructing and maintaining local and national identities. Farra Fanfarra adapted these traditional bands' institutional model of *associaçoes* (associations), a legally codified form of social and nonprofit organization integral to cultural life in Portugal. Highlighting the adaptability of this organizational form, we examine Portuguese *associativismo* (associativism) as a cultural practice and legal framework through which communities can adapt elements of traditional culture while engaging in innovative transformations. We argue that Farra Fanfarra's creative use of associativism furnishes the band with the *conditions of musical possibility* for its activities, considering the factors that widen or narrow the aperture of what is possible for the musical project. Associativism allows the band's innovation upon filarmónica traditions and maintains its viability in a context of capitalist cultural production. It promotes the band's mobility by supplying the institutional foundations to conduct exchanges around Europe available only to associations, providing band members with agency to creatively carry out the cultural policy objectives of European integration projects. Through these exchanges, Farra Fanfarra has become a protagonist in cultural diplomacy efforts and activist projects that musically forge intercultural encounters. We conclude that Farra Fanfarra's adaption of locally based Portuguese associativism constitutes an *emplaced cosmopolitanism* that reflects how Europeans have increasingly transformed local institutions as sites for supranational, intercultural action.

Resumo. A banda musical Farra Fanfarra, oriunda de Lisboa, Portugal, integra uma rede global de fanfarras musicalmente ecléticas e contraculturais. Não obstante, a banda também emergiu da tradição filarmónica do país, a qual

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desempenha um papel importante na construção e manutenção de identidades locais e nacionais. Destas bandas tradicionais, os Farra Fanfarra adaptam o modelo institucional da associação, enquanto forma de organização social sem fins lucrativos, legalmente codificada e intrinsecamente ligada à vida cultural em Portugal. Destacando a adaptabilidade desta estrutura organizacional, analisamos o associativismo português enquanto prática cultural e enquadramento jurídico através do qual as comunidades podem adaptar elementos da cultura tradicional, simultaneamente envolvendo-se em transformações inovadoras. Defendemos que o uso criativo do associativismo pelos Farra Fanfarra fornece à banda as *condições de possibilidade musical* para as suas atividades, considerando os fatores que ampliam ou restringem o leque de possibilidades para o projeto musical. O associativismo possibilita à banda inovar nas tradições filarmónicas e assegura a sua viabilidade num contexto de produção cultural capitalista. Promove a mobilidade da banda ao fornecer bases institucionais para a realização de intercâmbios por toda a Europa disponíveis apenas para associações, que conferem aos sócios a capacidade de concretizar os objetivos da política cultural dos projetos de integração europeia de forma criativa. Através destes intercâmbios, Farra Fanfarra assume um papel de protagonismo em iniciativas de diplomacia cultural e projetos ativistas que promovem encontros interculturais através da música. Concluímos que esta adaptação do associativismo português de base local configura um *cosmopolitismo enraizado* que reflete a forma como os cidadãos europeus têm vindo a alterar progressivamente as instituições locais em espaços de ação supranacional e intercultural.

Keywords: brass bands, associativism, European integration, cultural sustainability, economic ethnomusicology, cultural diplomacy

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In the rural coastal area of Sintra, Portugal, less than an hour drive from Lisbon, the alternative brass band Farra Fanfarra practices eclectic styles of brass music that they have performed around Portugal, Europe, the Middle East, and North America since its founding in 2006. Monday rehearsals often last until the wee hours of Tuesday, as the band works on new songs or cycles through older repertoire, eventually losing track of time as one song after another is called. They play Afrobeat, Balkan *čočeks*, New Orleans second line, reggae, and salsa, among other genres, but only rarely a Portuguese tune. Musicians work at improvising in the appropriate musical languages, inevitably fusing the many references of the diverse repertoire. One of the band's *animadores* (animators), who fronts the performances and engages the audience, practices circus arts and sings songs through a megaphone. The visitors and friends of the musicians come to listen and enjoy what they call *convívio*, or the joy of coming together.

These community members provide an audience for the band to enliven its performance, as others smoke cigarettes and cannabis while playing ping-pong.

On one summer night in 2022, this convívio extended well beyond the local Sintra setting, as the band hosted musicians from Italy, Germany, Serbia, and other European destinations to participate in an intercultural exchange, an initiative called Music for Human Rights, funded by the European Union (EU). Members of Farra Fanfarra already knew many of these guests from previous collaborations of the multisited project around Europe. On this occasion, they came to Portugal to write and record songs in the languages of the five countries they represented to accompany one of the project's outputs, a book of games designed to help youth around Europe reflect on human rights. On that night, Farra Fanfarra's musicians spent hours spontaneously rotating between their repertoire and following along to the songs called by the participating musicians from across the EU. These improvisatory collaborations would provide a foundation for the more focused work to compose music that would manifest the principles of the Music for Human Rights project (figure 1).

Farra Fanfarra's rehearsals and numerous cultural activities, such as this international exchange, are based out of its *sede* (its headquarters of activities), what the band calls the Armazém (warehouse). Formerly an agricultural depot, the Armazém is a lively place with high-ceilinged partitions that divide multiple rooms for a variety of functions. Old books on a wealth of subjects fill the shelves of the main rehearsal space, creating makeshift soundproofing. The building contains several rehearsal alcoves, a recording studio, a wardrobe area for band uniforms, a haberdashery, a dormitory room, a kitchen, art studio spaces, and multiple lounge zones, one of which converts into a bar area for events. Posters blanket the walls documenting the band's diverse participation in festivals and other events, and a trophy case displays their victories in national



Figure 1: Farra Fanfarra plays for the participants of the Music for Human Rights project. Photo by Andrew Snyder, 2022.

and international brass competitions, including Basque Country's Haizatera and Serbia's Guča.

The maintenance of the Armazém is a creative adaptation of the model of Portugal's more traditional *bandas filarmónicas* (philharmonic bands), as well as many other cultural organizations in the country that maintain such sedes for their activities. Farra Fanfarra is the most traveled and well known of the approximately fifty alternative brass bands in the *fanfarra* movement of Portugal that has steadily grown out of the filarmónicas in which most members learned their instruments. These more cosmopolitan[1] Portuguese bands have engaged in dynamic dialogue with the many globally oriented alternative brass bands around the world that similarly share eclectic brass repertoires and a countercultural approach to an ensemble often viewed as traditional. The larger global movement has increasingly consolidated networks through a growing series of international alternative brass music encounters, such as Montpellier's Festival des Fanfares in France, Rome's La Sbandata Romana, and the proliferation of HONK! festivals around the globe.[2] Yet, as is clear from the band's adaptation of the sede model of bandas filarmónicas, Farra Fanfarra is not merely a Portuguese manifestation of a global trend but one deeply embedded in its local cultural and institutional context, which makes it possible to survive, thrive, and innovate. This situatedness of the band in its Portuguese cultural context is shown in a massive mural covering the Armazém's outside walls that depicts a surreal dreamscape of brass instruments, vegetation, wildlife, and imaginative creatures (figure 2). Printed above these images are



Figure 2: A part of the mural around the entrance of the Farra Fanfarra Cultural Association's sede. Photo by Miguel Moniz, 2023.

the words Farra Fanfarra Associação Cultural, or the Farra Fanfarra Cultural Association.

In this article, we argue that the cultural, social, and economic foundations of the band's activities are embodied in and facilitated by this designation as an *associação cultural* (cultural association). A Portuguese *associação*[3] is a chartered nonprofit organization governed by statutes that provide members with a fiscal and legal framework through which they can undertake specified activities, such as music-making, as in the case of Farra Fanfarra. *Associações* are integral to civic participation in Portugal outside of or in concert with market relations, and the institutions provide communities with the legal standing to forge association-to-association exchanges within Portugal and increasingly across the supranational body of the EU (as illustrated above). The elemental institutions for the broader social practice of *associativismo* (associativism), associações in Portugal are "mediating institutions, which establish relations between different dimensions of social life, creating channels of communication between socially and culturally heterogeneous individuals and groups, and making them important agents of transformation in contemporary society" (Cordeiro 2010:82–83). Highlighting its commitment to the public good, one Portuguese city's guide to associativism declares that its motto is "One for all and all for one" (Fernandes and Castro 2005:7).

Perhaps the most common examples of Portuguese *associações* are the community centers that are distributed around Portuguese cities and that have long acted as vibrant social hubs for local communities. These institutions sometimes maintain official connections to sports clubs and offer a range of recreational activities, often housing a bar-café and banquet hall for gatherings. They are a crucial institutional element of Portuguese social life that helps to make possible and sustainable a variety of social practices, including music-making. In Lisbon, the neighborhood associações are the organizing spaces for the annual June Saints' Day *marchas populares* (popular marches), the city's largest festivity in which neighborhood groups compete against one another with themed songs accompanied by wind bands. The associações and their sedes have similarly been crucial for the institutionalization and survival of a range of Portuguese cultural practices, including bandas filarmónicas (Brucher 2005) and the folk troupes found across the country known as *ranchos folclóricos* (Holton 2005), and they have also played a role in sustaining Lisbon's *fado* song genre as a community practice (Gray 2013).

Parallel institutions exist in many other European countries,[4] and the cultural practice of organizing nonprofit civil society groups exists in some form throughout the world, even where it may not be known by such a culturally legible and legally codified framework as "associativism." Yet the contribution of such organizational forms to the sustainability and innovation of musical

practices has not often been rigorously examined. We thereby seek to contribute to the emerging field of economic ethnomusicology by exploring the political economy of music beyond, but in dialogue with, the capitalist framework of commodified performance in which the musical market is driven primarily by private actors motivated by profit. Nonprofit civil society organizations, by contrast, can draw on forms of support that are impelled by objectives other than financial profit, such as participating in publicly funded international projects devoted to music and human rights. Associações assist musical groups to better navigate capitalist production of music, providing an institutional and fiscal framework that provides advantages that would be otherwise unavailable. We assert that the institutional entity of its associação facilitates Farra Fanfarra's musicking.[5]

In this sense, we argue that organizing as an associação has been crucial for establishing what we call Farra Fanfarra's *conditions of musical possibility*. The term "conditions of possibility," first used by Immanuel Kant, refers to the necessary framework for the appearance of a given entity (see Leech 2017). Musical practices likewise depend on conditions of possibility, whether cultural, social, political, economic, or otherwise. While ethnomusicologists have long investigated the social context of musical traditions, our focus on conditions of musical possibility explores how these factors widen or narrow the aperture of what is possible for a given musical project. Here the associação provides the infrastructural foundation upon which Farra Fanfarra's activities are predicated to survive and thrive as a musical project; it is what allows the band to carry out its work from local to national and increasingly supranational settings.

This article examines how associativism provides the conditions of musical possibility for strategies of innovation, viability, and mobility. The band innovates by adapting the banda filarmónica tradition and its familiar associative model to pursue their untraditional activities.[6] They use associativism to maintain their viability as a musical project by relying upon their institutional, social, and fiscal frameworks for their activities. Finally, the associação status facilitates the band's mobility, including their many travels and local activities through partnerships within and beyond the EU. Many of these translocal activities are made possible by the incentives of cultural policies designed to foment European integration, an ongoing process of legal, political, social, and cultural transformations that have brought Europeans, and their civil society associations, into increasingly dynamic relationships in past decades.[7]

Ultimately, by adapting the associativist tradition, Farra Fanfarra deploys the locally and nationally based organizational structure of the Portuguese associação to contribute to and become protagonists in the Europeanization of EU civil society, along with many other associations across the EU that operate

similarly. Through associativism, Farra Fanfarra bases their operations and practices deeply in local traditions and communities while using this foundation as the jumping-off point for intercultural encounter. In what follows, we discuss associações in Portugal and their role in European integration; examine the associativist model of Portugal's banda filarmónicas on which Farra Fanfarra innovates; show how the band employs this model to maintain their viability; and explore examples of their participation in EU projects aimed at culturally facilitating European integration as well as in the integration of Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) countries and communities. We more broadly suggest that all musical projects have their own conditions of musical possibility, their musical ecosystem[8] of opportunities and constraints, without which they would exist differently, or not at all.

This article is the result of an equal partnership of two authors, with each section thoroughly cowritten and coedited. The article was developed from an unfunded research proposal on Portuguese alternative brass bands to the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, or FCT), which funds collaborative, team-based research projects, a norm in the humanities and social sciences in Portugal and the EU. Miguel Moniz is an anthropologist who has lived in Lisbon since 2005, whose work has examined associativism in Portugal, the Portuguese diaspora, and alternative brass bands in Portugal and Europe (Moniz 2025, 2024, 2020). For almost twenty years (since shortly after its founding) he has played with Farra Fanfarra as a marching guitarist and more recently has played tenor saxophone with the Portuguese Sociedade Filarmónica 1º Dezembro da Encarnação, which has provided further insight into fanfarras' relationships with filarmónicas.

Andrew Snyder is an ethnomusicologist living in Lisbon since 2021 who has researched the transnational network of alternative brass bands in the United States and Brazil, including through tours with American, Brazilian, and French bands in the Americas and Europe (Snyder 2022; Garofalo et al. 2020). This international experience provided a comparative context for exploring Farra Fanfarra's position within these global networks, and he has played trumpet with the band off and on since 2021.

In 2022, while jointly developing the FCT proposal, Snyder formally interviewed Moniz as a methodological strategy to develop insights for the project (April 9, 2022, Lisbon). Moniz's longitudinal autoethnographic fieldwork positions him not only as a researcher but as a primary, firsthand source, and quotations from that original interview are included in this text alongside other band members. Moniz also conducted interviews and research with Farra Fanfarra and other alternative fanfarras in Portugal as part of his participation in the FCT project Our Music, Our World.[9]

Portuguese Associativism

Approximately half of Portugal's population participates directly or indirectly in the country's more than thirty-one thousand associações, making them a crucial part of Portuguese civil society (Monteiro 2018). Moniz describes them as the "building blocks of democracy that allow local communities to act for the public good and have a voice where they wouldn't otherwise" (interview, 2022). Associações regulate a wide range of collectives, including unions, sports clubs, public health groups, education centers, social service providers, migrant rights groups, neighborhood institutions, professional organizations, and many others. Some of these have a national scope, but most of the associative organizations operate within a *junta da freguesia* (the smallest unit of local government) and exercise activities centered, at least in part, in a local municipality. Their elected slates of officers and boards of directors have legal authority to speak for the members and provide direction for the organizations' activities and fiscal solvency.

Portugal's associações have been an important element of political, civic, economic, and cultural life since the nineteenth century. They can be understood as the Portuguese manifestation of the broader emergence of voluntary associations, clubs, labor unions, and other comparable institutions of civil society that began to coalesce in Western countries in the nineteenth century. They were supported by Portugal's First Republic (1910–1926), but the Estado Novo fascist dictatorship (emerging from a coup in 1926 and lasting until 1974) deployed its propaganda apparatus to exert influence over them. In Lisbon, neighborhood associações were founded in great numbers in the 1930s during the dictatorship along with the formalization of the marchas populares that were, and are, rehearsed in their sedes, while ranchos folclóricos were similarly institutionalized in the countryside in accordance with the fascist regime's exaltation of the rural peasantry. The role of associações in Portuguese cultural life has for this reason often been portrayed as traditionalist, reinforcing restrictive concepts of *portugalidade*, a conservative nationalism famously represented by the "three Fs" of national song, sport, and religion (fado, *futebol*, and Fátima).[10] Yet, Daniel Melo argues that associações largely "managed to survive and cross over" the dictatorship period, "maintain[ing] a cultural alternative" and not fully succumbing to the regime (1999:125). Kim Holton (2005) has shown furthermore how ranchos folclóricos managed in some cases to use the collective agency provided by the associação to resist the Estado Novo's control. Associações have, therefore, long been spaces of cultural contestation between hierarchical control and community protagonism and resistance—they are flexible and dynamic vehicles for collective action.

Following the Portuguese Carnation Revolution in 1974, the new democratic context dramatically expanded the possibilities for associações to innovate

and embrace new communities, artistic projects, and political concerns. While Portugal's associações continue to be based in national legal frameworks and are almost always locally situated, the roles of many have grown increasingly transnational, international, and supranational. Immigrant communities in Portugal, such as Brazilian carnival groups in Lisbon, for example, have formed associacões to organize their own cultural activities (Snyder forthcoming). Portuguese migrant communities have relied upon associativist organizations to maintain diasporic community and cultural traditions abroad (Leal 2011, Holton 2005). These institutions have long provided conduits of contact with Portugal, often facilitating exchanges among Portuguese and Portuguese-diasporic communities as well as between Lusophone communities around the world.

Associations throughout Europe, though historically segmented into national frameworks of legal codes and traditions, have become crucial partners in European integration efforts. Christian Lahusen argued in 2006 that "as far as organized associationism [is concerned] . . . [the] Europeanization of civil societies is under way" (121), writing that this development "subverts the importance of shared moral convictions, established identities and solidarity bonds of the associational field *within* each nation state and creates functional complementarities and common interests or concerns *across* countries" (emphasis in original) (123). Governing institutions in the EU have created a "series of umbrella organizations, transnational networks or loosely coordinated organs, which engage in the brokerage of information between the European, national and local levels, represent the interests of their members at the EU, and assist them in applying for European funds" (131). In recognition of the competing national legal frameworks for associations in every EU country, the EU adopted a supranational legal framework for associations in 2023, aiming to further facilitate international collaborations.[11] As we will show, this emerging supranational integration of Europe's associations has provided the conditions of possibility for Farra Fanfarra to engage in social, cultural, and activist projects around the continent. While sustaining traditions connected to portugalidade, Portuguese associativism creates possibilities for musical and cultural innovation and societal engagement that allow traditional cultural practices to adapt to new political, cultural, and economic conditions in overlapping, nested contexts, from the local municipality to the Portuguese nation-state to the supranational EU.

Bandas Filamónicas, Farra Fanfarra, and Innovation

For the past several years on All Saints' Day weekend in the wet November chill, Farra Fanfarra gathers in the small village of Fontanelas outside of Sintra to play the Festival da Macã Reinata, the community's annual apple festival. Such agricultural fairs celebrating local communities on the occasion of their harvests

occur throughout small towns in Portugal, and local bandas filarmónicas are often called upon for the festivities. For the past several years in Fontenelas, however, the much more raucous Farra Fanfarra has taken over the ritual. They march to a New Orleans groove into the center of the town, burst into the tent displaying produce, and sing "Bourbon Street Parade" in English through a megaphone as the musicians pop up around the food stands and physically engage the audience with improvised solos. The band shifts into a Serbian čoček, then a Portuguese pop song, and then a Fela Kuti song. At one point, the trombonists engage in a bit called "suicide trombones" with acrobatic choreographies that, if incorrectly executed, would result in the destruction of instruments or a slide to the head. In this rural, daytime community celebration, the audience clearly enjoys the familiar performance, after which the musicians cavort with the villagers and sample the various apple-based goods. Indeed, Farra Fanfarra is part of the community, and, much like filarmónicas, their annual performance plays a fundamental role in maintaining good relations with the municipality in which the Farra Fanfarra associação is based and where its sede is located.

While the band does not sound like a filarmónica with its highly eclectic repertoire and outlandish performances, it can, at first appearance, look like one. Marching in lockstep and led by a *mestre* (conductor), filarmónica musicians wear dark military-style uniforms, with their emblems and names on display, and embody an ethic of professionalism despite their composition of primarily amateur musicians. Farra Fanfarra and other alternative brass bands also perform in uniform, usually a band-branded T-shirt or sweatshirt, but on this occasion the band breaks out its filarmónica-style uniform of military caps,



Figure 3: Farra Fanfarra in filarmónica-style uniforms marching in atypical filarmónica formation in Fontenalas's apple festival, in the band's home village. Photo by Miguel Moniz, November 1, 2021.

coats, and ties. Yet, while the filarmónica color scheme has largely been limited to muted colors, Farra Fanfarra is arrayed in bright green. These stylistic choices both pay homage to and satirize the outfits of their traditional counterparts while making themselves legible within the tradition from which they depart. This playfulness with traditional uniforms is common to other global alternative brass bands, such as US HONK! bands, which often reappropriate high school band uniforms in a punk aesthetic.

Farra Fanfarra is indeed an innovation on the aesthetic, social, and institutional forms of Portugal's community-based bandas filarmónicas, one of the more active band traditions in contemporary Europe. Organized as associações, filarmónicas bring together musicians across multiple generations in bands and musical schools to learn instruments, music theory, and repertoire. Open to anyone who wants to join, the groups perform at municipal concerts, socioreligious feast days and processions, and *arraiais* (outdoor festive events) throughout the year. Even as filarmónicas endeavor to distinguish themselves from one another through their musical choices, ensembles play comparable repertoires of marches, orchestral transcriptions, and popular songs in stationary street performances, seated concerts, and ambulatory processions.[12] While filarmónicas play from sheet music on lyres while marching in step, Farra plays from memory, allowing for a more ludic engagement with the crowd.

The filarmónicas are moreover firmly situated in their local communities, as Katherine Brucher argues that they "create and affirm identities grounded in place . . . invest[ing] a sense of place with social values that reiterate concepts of tradition, loyalty, honor, and prestige" (2005:3). This sense of locality is elicited in how the bands "evoke and perform *terra*" (26), literally "the land" and referring to the bands' "sense of place" (5), origin, and community. Their performances—at their local sedes, streets, and squares—affectively reinscribe this sense of place for musicians and audiences alike, as "performances outline the physical spaces of the *terra* . . . while the band and individual musicians articulate social relations that structure the community" (32). This sense of place is based not only on the bands' specific community or region but on a relatively restricted conception of portugalidade tied to Catholicism and local foods and customs, arising through collaborations with churches and local municipalities. During performances at Catholic socioreligious festivities, they are a central component of religious processions and sometimes participate musically in masses. Farra Fanfarra plays on the significations of these filarmónica performances by similarly parading through the public spaces of small towns, yet the alternative band's raucous and secular presentation style departs from the traditional bands' style.

In the late nineteenth century, filarmónica bands, likely modeled on English philharmonic societies (Lameiro 2010:108), grew exponentially along with the associativist movement in Portugal in parallel with musical associativist

movements elsewhere in Europe. In Portugal, musical associativism expanded civic participation, mutual aid, and self-sufficiency to the poorer sectors of society and thereby increased "interest in music as a social pursuit and a source for community and individual improvement" (Brucher 2005:104). Their organization as associações made filarmónicas into a "network of musical mutual aid societies that were active in politics, religious ritual, and social life" (112). Given these activities, the Estado Novo repressed and appropriated many elements of their civic engagements, and pressure on the bandas and their associações to conform to the fascist regime's rules for cultural expressions led some to view these bands as apolitical or conservative. Their activities declined during the dictatorship as they were sidelined by other musical ensembles, notably the ranchos folclóricos, which were compelled by the state to represent an "authentic" Portuguese peasantry (Holton 2005). Yet, the revolution in 1974 led to a period of "redemption and renaissance" for the bands (Brucher 2005:135), with female and youth involvement increasing.

In contemporary Portugal, filarmónica associações remain social and cultural hubs of local communities, especially in rural areas where they are much more active than in large cities like Lisbon. The groups' sedes, which in many villages are the primary public community center, physically instantiate their status as associações, providing a space to maintain musical and social traditions as well as receive community members and groups traveling from elsewhere. Participation in filarmónica activities is often a generational family affair encompassing all ages and relies on the participation of many nonmusician family members to help organize and work at events. Like the headquarters of ranchos folclóricos, "It is not only the physical (architectural) presence of the *sede* as home place of safe haven but also the physical (corporeal) embodiment of turn-of-the-the century traditions that has the power to protect against the ill effects of rapid modernization" (Holton 2005:96). Yet for all this prizing of locality, the articulation of place by the bandas filarmónicas grew increasingly transnational in the decades following the revolution. Many have toured outside of Portugal to visit Portuguese immigrant communities through association-to-association partnerships that rely primarily on Portuguese diaspora networks and reassert portugalidade in transnational settings. In the context of EU integration, the filarmónicas represent, as Brucher writes, "a safe way of adapting Portugal to contemporary European lifestyles and protecting youth from the hazards of Europeanization, most often symbolized as a loss of local identity" (2005:142).

Farra Fanfarra, on the other hand, amplifies the paradox Brucher articulates by maintaining local elements while diving headfirst into Europeanization and other international engagements. Though based in rural Sintra where many of the band's founding members reside, the band has always embodied the cosmopolitan ethos of the larger Lisbon area. Trombonist Francisco "Kiko" Amorim,

who learned his instrument at the Sociedade Filarmónico os Aliados, São Pedro, Sintra, has been the indispensable leader of Farra Fanfarra since its founding in 2006. Like Kiko, nearly all of the band's musicians have played in a filarmónica, and most learned their instruments in a filarmónica school or another musical associação, introducing them to the associative model at an early age. Many of the musicians from other European countries who play in the band have participated in musical associations in their own national traditions. But Kiko also connected with the burgeoning alternative brass band scenes around Europe through his participation in musical exchanges. In Barcelona, he played with the Always Drinking Marching Band, which provided the first inspiration to create a similar musically eclectic party brass band in Portugal. He first founded the brass band Kumpania Algazarra, which quickly gained popularity, and musician friends wanted to learn the repertoire and play with the ensemble. Aiming to limit that project to a fixed number of musicians, Kiko soon thereafter created Farra Fanfarra by drawing on the filarmónica model of an "open" band, ostensibly allowing anyone who wants to join the opportunity to do so. Both Portuguese words of Arabic origins, the names of these two bands point to their distinctiveness from the orderly filarmónica tradition, with *algazarra* translating to "racket" and *farra* to "party" (Moniz 2020: 367–9).

Farra Fanfarra distinguished itself from the banda filarmónica tradition as an alternative brass band in the development of its distinct performance and musical style while maintaining various links to the filarmónica tradition. The group takes part in popular music performance events—at music festivals, dance venues, and private parties—for which filarmónicas would be unlikely to be booked, while also playing events that commonly host filarmónicas, such as village festivals, sometimes playing alongside them. Unlike the filarmónicas, the band engages in performance and exchange programs that support progressive causes, including ethnic and racial diversity, poverty initiatives, HIV awareness, marijuana legalization, and LGBTQ+ rights, causes facilitated by their status as an association (Moniz 2025).

For particular occasions, they may play songs that are the common fare of filarmónicas—like the national anthem or festive marches, such as "Cheira a Lisboa" for the city's June socio-religious festival cycle of Santos Populares—but their standard repertoire is far more diverse than that of the filarmónicas.[13] The band draws on a musically eclectic aesthetic common to the global movement of alternative brass bands, sharing particular references that are reflective of their listening to and networking with other such bands. They play New Orleans brass band standards and adapt familiar jazz and funk tunes, such as Duke Ellington's "Blue Pepper," Cab Calloway's "Minnie the Moocher," and Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon," as well as Afrobeat songs like Fela Kuti's "JJD." Drawing on the band's and its members' many cultural exchanges in the Balkans, including at

Serbia's famed Guča festival, Farra Fanfarra plays many Balkan brass arrangements, influenced especially by the Romanian brass band Fanfare Ciocărlia. Their rendition of "Cabelo de Fogo" (Hair of Fire), a standard of the frenetic *frevo* brass band genre of Recife, Brazil, was based on an arrangement of the song from their longtime partner, alternative brass band Orquestra Voadora of Rio de Janeiro.[14] The band seamlessly moves between genres such as salsa, reggae, heavy metal, Portuguese pop music, and techno with little regard for geographical grouping of repertoire or explanations of musical origins to the audience.

Unlike most filarmónicas, whose members are primarily drawn from the local community, the rural location of Farra Fanfarra's sede does not prevent it from attracting members from around Portugal and the world due to its cosmopolitan profile. Though the vast majority of members were born and raised in Portugal, the band's proximity to a dynamic urban center that is characterized by diverse communities from around Europe, Africa, and South America provides them with a deep well of varied musicians. Now that it has been twenty years since Farra Fanfarra's founding, when most members at the band's inception were in their twenties and thirties, the band is approaching the filarmónicas' generational range, which can span from preschoolers to octogenarians, and they similarly draw from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Like the filarmónicas historically, most of the members are male, but Farra Fanfarra has always had female musicians, including the band's animadora and vocalist, its most visible performer whose role is a departure from the filarmónica tradition.

As both an outgrowth of and innovation upon Portugal's banda filarmónica tradition, as well as a local instantiation of a global network of musically eclectic brass bands, Farra Fanfarra is a manifestation of a musical "glocalization" that reflects "frictions" between the local and global (Tsing 2005). The band cannot be understood simply as a Portuguese appropriation of a global movement of alternative brass bands, reflective of a hierarchical model of globalization as the "recent regime under which nonwestern peoples are dominated and represented by the West" (Taylor 2007:113–114).[15] Lost in such a narrative would be the local specificity of these manifestations and consideration of how new global styles interact with, conflict with, or even bolster local and preexisting cultural practices. Associativism provides the foundation for the preservation of the filarmónica tradition as well as Farra Fanfarra's innovations upon it.

Associativism as a Foundation for Farra Fanfarra's Viability

"Without the association," Moniz explained, "Farra Fanfarra could not do what it does" (interview, 2022). Indeed, Farra Fanfarra, the band, and Farra Fanfarra,

the associação, form a singular institutional complex that creates the conditions of musical possibility for the continuing viability of the group.

Fundamental to associações in their designation as institutions that exist for the public good is that they are open for civic participation, allowing anyone to become a member. Drawing on the Portuguese associativist model governing the filarmónica tradition, Farra Fanfarra is "open" in the sense that theoretically anyone is invited to participate in rehearsals, learn repertoire, and be called to perform, and the band deploys this openness to its own advantage in several ways. Reflecting a model that is notably different from membership-based popular music groups, their receptivity to new members allows them to calibrate the needs of differing levels of musicians and performance opportunities. Rehearsals, as spaces of convívio (sociality), are effectively open to audiences and attended by those in the musicians' social networks, providing an opportunity to recruit new players. Adopting the filarmónica bands' role as community music schools, Farra Fanfarra invites musicians of various levels to attend rehearsals, and members make themselves available to newcomers to teach and refine songs.

While the musical and social elements are all attractions for participation, most members are also motivated by professional and financial pursuits. Despite its open role as a kind of music school, Farra Fanfarra also aims for a high degree of professionalism, and performing members generally work full or part time as professional musicians. Those who eventually demonstrate adequate knowledge



Figure 4: Farra Fanfarra at the Armazem during a Monday night rehearsal in October 2018. Photo courtesy of Farra Fanfarra.

of repertoire and appear regularly are eventually chosen to play gigs based on the musical directors' evaluation, instrumental needs for a given show, and the proximity of musicians to one another to facilitate travel. As in the filarmónica tradition where participation initially as an amateur can lead to remunerated roles in and beyond the bands, Farra Fanfarra's professional objectives are likewise supported by the open membership model because there is a constant supply of new musicians interested in joining the group. Because the band's musicians generally also play in other bands, the open model allows Farra Fanfarra not to rely solely on any one musician to function. While other professional bands, of course, call on substitutes, the open model eliminates the distinction between member and substitute. The band accepts nearly all gigs that meet booking conditions because it can form an *equipa* (team) for any show.

This structured plasticity based in associativism supports the members' work as professional musicians and the band's participation in the performance market, as it can arrange different-sized formations that maintain the basic instrumental structure, repertoire, and spirit of the larger ensemble. Different equipas regularly play similar repertoire for multiple concerts in different locations on the same night. Farra Fanfarra has even increased its remuneration by mounting "brass band encounters," akin to staged *despiques* (battles of the bands) of the filarmónicas, dividing its musicians into different formations with distinct uniforms. The open model has facilitated the band's ability to partner with and host visiting musicians from other European countries and from around the world, projects that take up much of the band's calendar as we explore below. In other words, the flexibility of associativism, whereby the band makes itself theoretically open to anyone in an engagement for the public good, allows the band to mobilize different groups of players for varied purposes, maximizing the financial opportunities for it and its members. In this respect, Farra Fanfarra's associativist model is akin to Thomas Turino's (2008) distinction between a core and periphery of musical agents whereby a central group of musicians provides the foundation for the participation of others, unlike other alternative brass bands around the world that experiment with horizontal and democratic governance models (Snyder 2023a).

This hierarchical management and musical leadership structure is based as much on the band's musical needs as in its legal statute as a chartered cultural associação. Associative organizations legally require the formation of a *mesa de assembleia* (executive board) including board officers, notably a president of the board,[16] who has a juridical role to call and sign off on meetings, and a fiscal board that approves finances. The operational officers, such as an association president (who acts as executive director), a treasurer, and a musical director, are separate from the mesa and charged with running the associação's daily operations. All associação members in good standing have the right to hold office or

vote for officers, and most do participate in elections, even if there is only one unopposed slate. Although essential for the objectives of the associação, most musicians who come regularly to rehearsals and perform are relatively unconcerned with its management and are motivated to play music rather than take on official roles.

Associações require a legal governing structure that, while formalized, is in practice adaptable to the needs of a given group. Farra Fanfarra, for example, has both a *de jure* hierarchy, assigning legal executive functions to particular individuals that can be honorific, and a more primary *de facto* hierarchy. The latter is composed of members who may or may not have official roles but exercise effective power as a result of their personal status and importance to the organization's operation. Few musicians in the band (including sometimes those in the roles themselves!) are aware of who the president of the board or other officers are. Yet, everyone knows that the band's founder Kiko makes the final decisions and knows the other key members who are responsible for creating teams, musical direction, and management of finances and logistics for concerts and exchanges. As in other associações, older respected members have a prominent voice regardless of their defined roles on paper. The legal structure of the associação is thus only partially manifested in the band's de facto organization, yet the status itself necessarily creates a structure of accountability for managing the institution while offering a space for social, musical, and civic participation. The governing structure further provides institutional continuity that helps bridge the gap between seasons when the band is less active, helping to ensure its survival.

The associação status provides many benefits that are unavailable for individual musicians or bands working as independent contractors (*recibos verdes*), notably a tax-exempt status for the organization and its activities. The nonprofit status does not prohibit payments to and by the institution nor the accumulation of assets, but assets are held collectively by the institution and are not paid out to individuals as dividends. The associação provides an institutional vehicle for musicians to be paid or reimbursed for expenses carrying out the collective's objectives, including gas, meals, accommodation, and any activity conceivably related. It provides a means to negotiate work with other governmental and associative institutions, which favor partnerships with associações both as a matter of cultural practice and fiscal statute. One Farra Fanfarra member who has founded multiple associações explained that the institutions "provide logistics for production and a legal structure that, on behalf of musicians, can arrange contracts from institutions and local governments, which would be unwilling to offer them to individuals on their own" (interview, Nuno Reis, April 19, 2023, Lisbon).

The nonprofit status also facilitates and incentivizes different forms of cultural production than exist in a more exclusively market-driven model of

financial sustainability, providing financial incentives for engaging in noncommercial forms of performance and supporting musical activism, community-engaged activities, and nonprofit projects and events that aim to fortify civil society. Such participation burnishes the band's reputation as a force for public good, which has social and financial value in the music-for-hire market. The band often plays uncompensated benefit concerts for local community events and supports social causes that can provide relief from tax liability or garner other social benefits. Recalling activities before the Estado Novo dictatorship of the bandas filarmónicas, which would regularly play for political events (Brucher 2005), Farra Fanfarra plays benefit concerts for activist and nonprofit organizations, such as the Red Cross or Cerebral Palsy Association. These organizations provide the band not with direct payments but rather receipts that can reduce taxes while also helping it to meet the conditions of its nonprofit status. Many indirect forms of financing through subsidies and governmental and institutional arts and culture grants are available specifically for associações, such as a Portuguese Ministry of Culture-supported talk show that the band hosted at the Armazém during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. As Moniz explained, the associação allows the group to not "rely solely on its gigs to stay solvent" (interview, 2022).

The Armazém itself is a manifestation of the associativist practice of maintaining a sede. The building is the culmination of a history of rehearsal spaces that began in Kiko's living room, before moving for several years to the popular associative art and residence space Bacalhoeiro in Lisbon, as well as other associative spaces. Farra Fanfarra gained local recognition and a cosmopolitan profile by holding open rehearsals and playing concerts there before being chased out of the city by the pressures of gentrification and Lisbon's growing tourism industry (Moniz 2020; Snyder 2023b). These dynamics led the group to a circuitous strategic retreat back to Sintra where, facilitated by its status as an associação, Farra Fanfarra leases the Armazém. Moniz asserted that "the use of that building assists the collective's status and activities as a cultural associação. Usually, the use of a sede is only possible because of association status" (interview, 2022). Other alternative brass bands in Portugal organized as associações have benefited directly from their local governments' provision of spaces and funding for sedes. In this respect, Farra Fanfarra adapts the tradition of filarmónicas and other Portuguese cultural associações, using physical sedes for its activities and community outreach and to host national and international exchanges.

Through its organization as an associação, the band's participation in traditional festivities blurs distinctions between insider and outsider, complexifying how these bands "perform place," as Brucher (2013) writes of the filarmónicas. Kiko related that the band's performance at the apple festival and other local events at which filarmónicas also play assisted the Farra Fanfarra associação and many of its members to gain local acceptance and support (interview, Francisco

Amorim, April 24, 2023, Sintra). Through this relationship, the group raises money through its activities with some public support from the local junta da freguesia and city government. Compared to families living for multiple generations in the town where the sede is located, Farra Fanfarra and many of its members have only recently come to reside in the area. Yet, through their associativist activities and performances in local festivities, these relative newcomers gain status within local communities, building partnerships with governmental officials and other associações and facilitating future collaborations. In their return from Lisbon, they have benefitted from the fact that rural associações in wealthier municipalities like Sintra often provide more funds for public musical and community activities and can better support associações than their urban counterparts. Rural associações can especially benefit from the nonprofit model, which provides alternatives to profit-motivated remuneration for performance activities that are more readily available in urban areas while Farra Fanfarra also takes advantage of for-profit opportunities in Lisbon and around the country.

Moreover, the gentrification that poses an ongoing threat to associativism in cities has boosted the cosmopolitanism of some rural spaces, as organizations like Farra Fanfarra look outside of urban centers for sedes that they can afford and communities that can support their activities. Indeed, despite settling back in a rural area and regularly collaborating with local partners, the band continues to practice its diverse repertoires and participate in pan-European exchanges, asserting a cosmopolitan sociality more associated with the city of Lisbon. That is, the band synthesizes opportunities available in both rural and urban settings specific to the geographic context for their associativism. In a moment in which many associations in rural Portugal are declining due to the aging out or outward mobility of their members, while those in urban centers are confronting displacement due to gentrification, such innovative uses of the organizational form offer pathways for associativism to be renewed in changing circumstances. Farra Fanfarra's innovation on filarmónica associativism, generally more limited to rural spaces, thus further amplifies their broader viability. This is just one example of how Farra Fanfarra has adapted associativism to provide the conditions of musical possibility to sustain itself over almost two decades.

Associativism as a Vehicle for Mobility and Participation in European Integration

Even from this rural space, associativism has provided the condition of musical possibility for Farra Fanfarra's impressive mobility beyond the nation-state through the band's participation in association-to-association exchanges (*intercâmbios*) mostly within Europe but also within Lusophone networks. In 2018,

for example, the band participated in the "Small Towns . . . Big Results" project (Kunsill Lokali L-Gharb 2019), which was cofunded by the EU's Europe for Citizens Programme and intended to facilitate EU-wide contact between representatives of assorted small towns. The program sponsored projects to "help the public understand the EU's history, values, and diversity [and] encourage citizens to participate and engage in democracy at the EU level" (European Commission n.d.). The exchange, attended by Moniz, brought Farra Fanfarra, a representative of a small town despite the band's cosmopolitan outlook, to the small island of Gozo, Malta, through the municipal government of Baião. Other performers and groups, including philharmonic bands, were affiliated with associations from L-Gharb and Ghajnsielem, Gozo; the towns of Tolfa and San Polo dei Cavalieri outside of Rome; Črnomelj in Slovenia; Pečky in the Czech Republic; and Sicily.

The events aimed to project Malta as a partner in the EU project, as the country has presented a challenge for the EU's rhetoric of liberal democratic politics due to its opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights as well as corruption allegations and attacks on the press. Shortly before the trip, anticorruption activist and journalist Daphne Anne Caruana Galizia had been assassinated, making international headlines regarding the work left to be done to bring Malta closer to EU expectations. At the exchange, the invited groups performed in several parades and performances, including a commemoration for World War II in which Malta supported the Allied victory. Reflecting on the exchange, Moniz remarked, "World War II resulted in unifying Europe, right? And Malta's role in that was on the side of the good guys. The exchange was about this idea of creating a space for Malta to be developed as a partner in the European experiment because of their role in World War II" (interview, 2022). Indeed, the historical support of the Allies was an important present-day claim for Malta's European ambitions, as the end of World War II marks the beginning of the reconciliation process that made the EU possible. With the president of Malta and other elected officials presiding at various ceremonies and performances, the invited bands paraded along with local and visiting filarmónicas. The processions incorporated these various national performance groups to present a public narrative about EU integration while celebrating Malta's role in aiding the Allies and ultimately highlighting the country's role as a partner in the European experiment. During the weekend events, the international bands shared lodging and meals, took tours, and played together, fortifying international social and musical experiences behind the scenes as well.

Farra Fanfarra participates several times per year in internationally funded exchanges such as this one, many of which are available only to associations. Indeed, mediating and facilitating exchanges is an essential feature of associativism more broadly, as translocal contacts are undertaken by individuals through

the collective organizations. While filarmónica bands also participate in international exchanges, they tend to collaborate in encounters among Portuguese and diasporic communities that express transnational notions of portugalidade. By contrast, most of Farra Fanfarra's travels and partnerships in Europe have been facilitated by association-to-association exchanges through EU-funded cultural projects promoting European integration. These activities support what is referred to in Europe as "mobility," or the increasing movement of EU citizens and residents between member-states, which provides opportunities for intercultural engagements and forging pan-European identities.

Many supporters of the European project have argued for the need for such intercultural encounters as crucial to the EU's success in addition to the bureaucratic work of institutional integration in the face of growing Euro-skepticism represented by Brexit and resurgent illiberal nationalism throughout the union. Richard McMahon (2013) argued that culture has played a crucial role in fomenting "post-national" senses of identity through the EU's "strategy of promoting transnational civil society networks in the culture industries, as an effective means of encouraging identification with Europe." Indeed, without cultural initiatives that "move beyond national models" across EU civil society, he suggests that political integration reflecting Europe's "supposedly universal, liberal civic ideals like citizenship . . . [and] cultural rights" and liberal-democratic values is bound to fail. Philip Bohlman notes the prominence of music in "Europe-wide cultural policy . . . precisely because of music's potential to make connections and effect connectedness across historical and political borders" (2004:209). He contends that in the EU-era "New Europe," music has played a role in forging a sense of what he calls "New Europeanness"—a "new aesthetics" of "connection and connectedness" (208). "Crucial to the musical ontologies of New Europeanness," he argues, is that "music and musicians are mobile" (211). Or, as Moniz recounted,

> These are multicountry encounters that bring different people together and basically try to create European shareholders through forging some sense of commonality between those who take part, and the idea is that this will foster a more cohesive, political unit. . . . Musicians are incentivized to leave the world in better shape and create connections to other people, which obviously is a cornerstone of peace—and peace is ultimately the cornerstone of business. (Interview, 2022)

It is in this context that Farra Fanfarra and associations across Europe have participated in cultural diplomacy projects advancing cultural policies that offer opportunities for mobility in the form of unprecedented travel and international partnerships. We suggest that, in the New Europe, the intra-European encounter is no longer forged solely by representatives of autonomous nation-states but rather through dynamic engagements that aim to integrate what we regard as an intercultural as well as a multinational Europe.[17] While Farra Fanfarra is funded

as a representative of Portugal or a Portuguese locality, its primary role is not to perform portugalidade on the European stage but rather to forge intercultural and experimental partnerships with international partners. Yet, we view the band's engagements as not merely reflective of the integration of European institutions; the association is a force that actively creates New Europeanness. In other words, we expand Bohlman's (2004) concept by portraying the musicians as protagonists of New Europeanness. EU cultural policy constitutes an opportunity framework that sets standards and principles that are then creatively interpreted, crafted, and administered by cultural associations. Local, national, and supranational governmental institutions do not wholly set cultural policy but also fund associations to do so. Since the EU is often depicted by Europeans themselves as a faceless, remote collection of institutions run by anonymous bureaucrats, it is crucial to understand how community actors actively forge the emergent culture of New Europeanness, as Farra Fanfarra did in Malta and in other exchange projects.

These EU programs do not explicitly require musical groups to mute their national identities or diversify their repertoires. Yet, project proposal language tends to encourage applicants to highlight how their cultural production will contribute to relatively liberal policy goals related to EU integration, immigrant settlement, intercultural engagement, freedom of movement and expression, promotion of democracy, and LGBTQ+ rights, among others.[18] In the case of Farra Fanfarra, the group's diverse repertoire and embrace of activist causes have made them a logical choice for funding opportunities that provide for European mobility in alignment with projects that support inclusion of people with disabilities in circus arts, foment engagement in the arts for youth to combat addiction, or promote inclusion of ethnic minorities in local communities, to name a few recent exchanges in which Farra Fanfarra has participated around Europe. The relatively progressive EU policy goals they carry out are sometimes in conflict with realities on the ground, such as Farra Fanfarra's participation in exchanges directly or indirectly promoting gender and sexuality equality, which are often led by LGBTQ+ members of the associação. One member, discussing the tense situations participants have faced, questioned the sagacity of sending young people, including teenagers, to develop and carry out complicated EU policy goals in conservative communities, such as in Serbia, where one exchange took place.

One of the primary sources of funding available to associações like Farra Fanfarra to pursue the EU's goal of European mobility is the EU-funded program Erasmus+. Founded in 1987, the original Erasmus mobility program allows European students to study internationally within the EU's integrated university programs, exemplifying the EU's motto "United in Diversity." The so-called Erasmus generation constitutes a class of younger Europeans whose

experiences living abroad within Europe has cultivated international and supranational perspectives among them, and a sizeable minority of Erasmus students end up settling in their adopted countries. In Portugal, they have been members in contemporary cultural associações like Farra Fanfarra's and comprise core audiences in Lisbon and other Portuguese university cities for innovative cultural projects. Since 2014, Erasmus+ has aimed to advance cultural integration among "youth" (defined as under thirty) beyond the university system through other educational, training, sport, and cultural activities. The program provides grants for associativist projects embodying the cooperative goals of EU integration, often by convening young people from across Europe to work with others outside their home countries. The grants "creat[e] transnational cooperative partnerships with organisations from other countries in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices" (European Commission 2025).

One of Farra Fanfarra's primary longstanding partners in Erasmus+ and other exchanges has been the Roter Baum association in Germany. Roter Baum maintains a *Jugendzentrum* (youth center) in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, a town in former East Berlin that has housed assistance centers and residences for refugee communities who have been subjected to violent antimigrant protests. The youth center intends to provide a safe space for young people in the community of all backgrounds and citizenship status. Through Roter Baum's creative partnership in the program "Roots and Ways of Cultural Diversity in Music," the German association collaborated with Farra Fanfarra and other European associations on a performance at Berlin's 2015 Karneval der Kulturen (Carnival of Cultures), in which Moniz participated as an over-thirty program "chaperone." The Karneval is a massive annual parade celebrating multicultural diversity and human rights that is broadcast live on national television throughout Germany. Roter Baum, Farra Fanfarra, and a participating theater association led local musicians and youth at the center to develop, rehearse, and perform music and choreography for their performance in Berlin. The collaborative pageant included musical accompaniment as the group's float, a castle with a boat in pursuit, was ripped apart. Dancers representing refugees attempted to traverse the divide to the castle but were repelled from entering. The castle float referred to what has become known as "Fortress Europe," a phrase that calls attention to the fact that the mobility prized by Europeans is restricted for those outside its borders (for full performance, see ALEX Berlin 2025).

Roter Baum and Farra Fanfarra have since worked together on increasingly ambitious Erasmus+ projects including "Music for Human Rights," foreshadowed in this article's introduction (Roter Baum 2021). The band collaborates in this project with associations based in Pančevo, Serbia; Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Turin, Italy; and Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israel (despite not belonging to the EU, Israel is an Erasmus partner country). This project has brought



Figure 5: Composite of Roter Baum/Farra Fanfarra float and performance at 2015 Karneval der Kulturen, Berlin. Video stills from public broadcast by Alex Berlin.

together musicians and artists for musical collaboration in rotating encounters among each of the countries that last a week or longer. Events vary but have always involved musical education, arts workshops, and concerts to address broader philosophical reflections on human rights, diversity, and social equality, aiming to reach across social divides of nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, and sexual orientation, among others. Participants from Farra Fanfarra often include musicians and nonmusicians who are not band members but are part of the associação, and at each locale, intercultural ensembles are formed from the diverse participants. As Moniz recounted,

> The projects take young musicians from around Europe and team them up with more experienced musicians. We teach them how to advance musically, and we hold jam nights where all the bands play together. Out of all this, we create these bands of multicountry musicians, and then usually we put on some big concert. . . . So local audiences around Europe end up watching young musicians from all over Europe play sets for them, often on political themes. (Interview, 2022)

The Music for Human Rights (n.d.) website outlines five themes of action: "cultural and religious dialogue, escape and expulsion, freedom of art, migration

for economic reasons, and social justice." By using music as an enjoyable and experimental method to reflect upon human rights issues, the project frames itself in EU language as a "non-formal education" project, defined by the Council of Europe (2025) as "planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, that happen outside the formal educational curriculum, including in youth organisations." The Music for Human Rights project emphasizes interculturality as a human right and a basis for the recognition of the human rights of others, a frame that is well supported by the Erasmus+ program. The organization writes, "Music was a base to touch on interculturality. . . . Within the music, we have made a strong foundation for tolerance and solidarity, which were the main points of our cooperation" (Music for Human Rights n.d.). Although the project is headed by Roter Baum in Berlin, the website is written not in German, Portuguese, or the language of any of the participating associations but in a pan-European nonnative English—what some call an Erasmus English. English is used to communicate between project participants, underlining the expectation that young Europeans have a functional knowledge of the language and reflecting the expanding role of English in EU integration.

In 2022, the project published the online and printed book *Music for Human Rights: Educational Music Tools to Promote Human Rights Among Young People* (2022), an output that resulted from years of collaborative work and exchanges around Europe. The publication presents group activities—including role-playing games, sketches, pantomime, music videos, guided debates, and more—that are designed around particular human rights themes, such as the recognition of privilege, climate justice, diversity, freedom of speech, cultural rights, freedom of movement, health, and antidiscrimination. Each activity is paired with a song composed by participants in the workshops. These songs, written by the various organizations at Farra Fanfarra's sede that summer, were recorded in English as well as the languages of the primary participating associations. The book justifies its projects and organizations in the internationalist language of EU-stated principles as well as those of the United Nations, from which much EU project language is drawn. These institutional principles become performative and self-reinforcing, as they provide a framework of engagement for the participating groups. For example, when describing the participating associations, the authors write of Farra Fanfarra that "the association promotes positive values, tolerance, sustainable development, cultural policy, employment, volunteering and inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities, using art and culture as a tool for promotion" (Roter Baum 2022:7). The importance of these stated values contrasts with what the book's authors describe as "the growth of radicalization in public spheres and political life all over Europe," implicitly referring to illiberal nationalist groups that might seek to undermine EU integration (8).

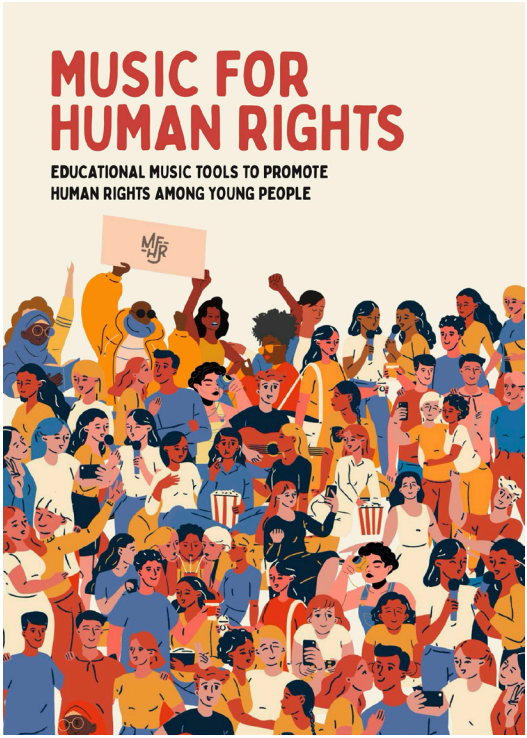


Figure 6: Project book cover, 2022.

Adopting this EU and UN institutional language, the book organizes activities into age-based sections around the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, with each activity coded by particular articles of the UN declarations.

These goals are reinforced by the didactic lyrics of the songs accompanying the book's activities, also developed during the exchanges. The Music for Human Rights project is the result of a partnership of associations devoted to musical styles beyond alternative brass bands, and the songs on the two albums are based on a pop-band format with lead vocals backed by drums and harmony instruments with horn accompaniment. They feature a variety of global popular music styles, many of which are ingredients of Farra Fanfarra's repertoire, including Afrobeat, swing, salsa, ska, and Balkan music, while the vocals are primarily rapped or sung in a global pop style, featured on the website in the languages of participating members (Roter Baum Berlin 2022a and 2022b).

For example, in one game/song activity, participants role-play the differential access of passport privilege, after which they are invited to discuss this experience upon listening to the song "Run Run" (Roter Baum Berlin 2022b).

After a slow introduction, the song gathers the sense of urgency reflected in the title with a fast 3+3+2 rhythm outlining minor chords and punctuated by a recurring horn line. The singer raps in Italian about the experience of a migrant hiding fearful and clandestine in a truck while dreaming of an alternative reality. The project's devotion to a politics of freedom of movement expressed in the game/song reflects a solidarity with migrants that celebrates mobility beyond the frontiers of Europe. This conjunction recalls Bohlman's claim that "the New Europeanness also assumes subaltern forms, permitting the nationless to give voice to their connections to Europe" (2004:209).[19]

The song, along with the rest of the book's music, reflects the eclectic musical styles of Farra Fanfarra and the group's willingness to develop new musical vocabularies through these exchanges. The Music for Human Rights project was developed in accordance with the values articulated in an EU institutional funding call to enact intercultural policy outcomes but was crafted from the associations' creative collaborations. The EU's integrationist framework incentivized Farra Fanfarra and their collaborators to amplify their international and intercultural orientations to compete for grants. In turn, these opportunities also create conditions of musical possibility for groups that put these values into action, creating a feedback loop for associations to protagonize New Europeanness.

Finally, Farra Fanfarra, in using associativism as a vehicle for travel and exchange, has also contributed to the cultural integration of another supranational organization, the Community of Portuguese-Language Countries (CPLP). Since 1996, the institution has sought to forge postcolonial and diasporic connections through *lusofonia*, the cultural diplomatic framework that celebrates supposed common links between diverse communities through the Portuguese language. Farra Fanfarra has had considerable contact with other musicians and bands from Lusophone spaces, such as the Brazilian alternative brass band Orquestra Voadora of Rio de Janeiro, which has hosted Kumpania Algazarra and was hosted by Farra Fanfarra in Portugal in 2009 and 2022 (figure 7). Algazarra has also made use of these networks, performing in the Portuguese ex-colony of Macau at the Festival Lusofonia. These collaborations are quite dissimilar to the transnational networking and travels of the filarmónicas, which tend to evade lusofonia discourses and restrict their exchanges to representatives of the Portuguese nation-state and its diaspora (see Brucher 2013). In a final discussion of Farra Fanfarra's engagements in Portugal's Lusophone networks, we expand Bohlman's (2004) predominantly intra-European understanding of New Europeanness by exploring postcolonial and diasporic partnerships as a fundamental element of the tensions surrounding this emergent New European culture.

Farra Fanfarra has built on the tradition of bandas filarmónicas traveling to collaborate with Portuguese immigrant communities abroad through



Figure 7: Orquestra Voadora from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (left), hosted by Farra Fanfarra (right) in Sintra, Portugal. Photo courtesy of Farra Fanfarra, September 2022.

diasporic associativist networks, but these encounters have at times created friction when they have encountered some Portuguese communities outside of Europe. For example, an exchange during a tour of southeastern New England in 2015 (organized by Moniz) relied upon support from partners in previous association-to-association projects, as well as Moniz's academic and personal contacts from researching and belonging to associações in Portuguese migrant communities. The tour was supported by diasporic institutions that provided funding, meals, and performance venues, including the Casa dos Açores da Nova Inglaterra, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Portuguese studies centers at several area universities, and the Luso-American Foundation (FLAD), a US/Portugal government institution that promotes bilateral cooperation. The band's status as an associação made possible the financing for the trip as well as entry into the United States, which was undertaken without the necessity of temporary worker visas.

Unlike Portuguese filarmónicas that visit North America and elsewhere, Farra Fanfarra engaged beyond the diasporic institutions that reassert portugalidade as a "deterritorialized ethno-national identity" (Brucher 2013:111), performing at Boston's House of Blues and other music clubs. They collaborated

with bands like the Undertow Brass Band (formerly What Cheer? Brigade), which hosts the annual PRONK festival, a Providence, Rhode Island, take on the HONK! movement. Diasporic community associações and cultural groups assisted the journey, including the Azorean-American trad-folk band Belaroura and the comedy troupe The Portuguese Kids. Yet, despite contacting three local filarmónica bands in an effort to partner with them, none were interested in collaborating with Farra Fanfarra. The gap between immigrant-founded filarmónicas and a countercultural band like Farra Fanfarra appeared much more pronounced than in Portugal itself, where alternative bands like Farra Fanfarra often play shows alongside filarmónicas and share many common members. Farra Fanfarra posed a challenge to the filarmónica bands' role in maintaining ethnic in-group identities in New England by performing outside of what some in the community consider orthodox representations of Portuguese identities.

The tour's anchor concert was the capstone event at the celebration of Portuguese Language Day organized by the LusoCentro of Bristol Community College in Fall River, Massachusetts, a town with a majority Luso-American and Portuguese immigrant population. An audience of approximately five hundred students, dozens of teachers from area schools, and a range of dignitaries, including US and Portuguese governmental officials, attend each year. The event features a musical performance from the "Lusophone world" accompanied by a keynote lecture providing cultural context for the genre. On this occasion, Farra Fanfarra performed the concert and Moniz gave the lecture. During negotiations for the show, the LusoCentro's director asked, as this was a Portuguese culture event, if the band played any "Portuguese music." Having almost nothing they could designate as particularly "Portuguese"—save a cover of "Wegue Wegue" by the Lisbon-Angolan *kuduru* band Buraka Som Sistema—Farra Fanfarra responded that their eclectic set list was not dissimilar from many filarmónicas in Portugal that also play international music. Nonetheless, to assuage the event's organizer, the band added a Portuguese pop song, "Criatura da Noite" by Entre Aspas, which, although instantly recognizable in Portugal, would not be categorized as traditional "Portuguese music." Brucher describes a similar dynamic, relating that Portuguese American filarmónica musicians were "shocked to hear" a Portuguese filarmónica playing "When the Saints" while traveling in Portugal (2013:111), arguing that the bands in Portugal are more liberal with repertoire than those in the immigrant communities. Here, in an immigrant context more deeply committed to rigid definitions of portugalidade, Farra Fanfarra's innovations on the banda filarmónica associative tradition, so crucial to their viability in Portugal and travels around Europe, reached a limit, albeit one that was overcome once the band started playing and won over audiences in the local immigrant community.

Associations as Conditions of Musical Possibility in Portugal, the New Europe, and Beyond

The relatively conservative reaction toward Farra Fanfarra's innovative performance in New England is not, however, limited to diasporic contexts abroad. All over Europe, including in Portugal in the form of the recent explosive growth of the far-right Chega party, right-wing reactions are growing against projects representing European mobilities and cultural diversity. The confederation is often critiqued by the right as supposedly promoting a supranational cosmopolitan culture that is increasingly disconnected from and disparaging of local lifeways. Superficially, one might perceive Farra Fanfarra as personifying such a specter of a deracinated musical project, and Bohlman himself depicts New Europeanness as resulting from a "crisis of placelessness" (2004:209). Yet, despite standing in contrast to the local and national "place" performed by bandas filarmónicas (Brucher 2005), we have depicted Farra Fanfarra in its adaptation of Portuguese associativism as firmly situated within its local, rural context while engaging in translocal partnerships and mobilities.

Rather than expressing the traditional placeness of portugalidade or a crisis of placelessness, we see Farra Fanfarra as a manifestation of an *emplaced cosmopolitanism*. In this sense of place, the local, national, and supranational are experienced and expressed simultaneously and self-consciously in ways that are well suited to navigate and enact European integration. For the continued existence of the EU is not a given. It is an ongoing argument, and its success relies in part on the efforts of groups like Farra Fanfarra to use their local organizational forms to reach beyond the nation-state and exercise their rights to European mobility. In doing so, they imagine and enact what the New Europe might be while toggling between local and supranational contexts. Indeed, this article has shown that the expansion of cosmopolitan culture represented by a band like Farra Fanfarra within EU-era Portugal does not necessarily challenge local traditions and institutions. Rather, it comes into being through the revitalization and resignification of these traditions and institutions, like the band's innovative adaptation of the Portuguese associação form (Moniz 2025). The very traditions supposedly threatened by Europeanization and its reconfigurations of senses of place and identity might be readapted as powerful tools—the conditions of musical possibility—to develop cultural agency amid these disruptive transformations. In this sense, although associações have been shown to be crucial to maintaining some of Portugal's iconic musical traditions, we have underscored how the cultural form may be adapted in pursuit of new goals, from local to global contexts.

In this article, we have argued that it is the local and national framework of associativism that provides the conditions of musical possibility for Farra Fanfarra's activities at the band's core. Associativism allows the group to innovate

upon the Portuguese banda filarmónica tradition and its organizational forms, maintain its viability as a professional musical project open to newcomers while taking advantage of nonprofit incentives, and pursue experimental and intercultural mobility projects that reflect and put into action the cultural integration of European civil society. Without its associação, an aesthetically similar Farra Fanfarra might still exist in Portugal, but it would likely be less embedded in its local cultural setting. It would have more difficulties maintaining its sede or, more likely, would not have one. The band would have less incentive to operate as a community music school, be more likely to follow the commercial music industry, and be less able to pursue nonlucrative performances and other endeavors in the name of the public good. The band might still travel internationally, but perhaps solely to the festivals that would cover their costs through private sponsors and ticket sales, not to publicly funded activist exchanges around Europe and Lusophone spaces that carry out supranational cultural policy goals.

We have more broadly argued that attention to the conditions of musical possibility, which create particular frameworks for the realization of music-making, can sharpen focus on how musical practitioners navigate opportunities and constraints in social, legal, cultural, political, and other domains. More specifically, nonprofit civil society institutions, such as associações in Portugal, play underappreciated roles in providing the conditions of musical possibility that maintain, expand, and transform musical practices around the world. Ethnomusicological work focused on the institutional conditions of musical possibility, as we have sought to do here, might enter more deeply into the nitty-gritty of bureaucracy and cultural policies to understand how music groups make use of and are shaped by the institutions to which they are tied to pursue their day-to-day activities and realize their dreams.

Notes

1. Here we draw on Martin Stokes's view of cosmopolitanism as "how people in specific places and at specific times have embraced the music of others, and how, in doing so, they have enabled musical styles and musical ideas, musicians and musical instruments to circulate in particular ways" (2007:6).

2. In this global context, we use the term "alternative brass bands" to point to their countercultural distinction from brass and wind bands traditionally tied to military or local civic institutions, such as Portugal's bandas filarmónicas. The original HONK! Festival of Activist Street Bands emerged in 2006 in Somerville, Massachusetts, and has since spread across the globe. See Garofalo et al. (2020) on HONK! For more on Portugal's own movement, which generally uses the Portuguese term *fanfarra*, see Moniz (2020).

3. When referring to associations in the Portuguese context, we use the Portuguese term associação (associações in the plural) while we use "association" to refer to the institution in international contexts.

4. The EU Commission (n.d.a) defines associations as "legal entities present in Europe's social economy . . . that provide services and goods in sectors with a societal impact" and that are voluntary, membership based, participatory, nonprofit, and collectively governed.

5. See Morcom and Taylor (2020) on economic ethnomusicology. For more on interactions between social and economic value, see Taylor (2023).

6. See Moniz (2025:165–187) for further reflection on how associações have been adapted in Portugal for progressive activism while drawing on traditional practices and institutional arrangements.

7. European integration was initiated shortly after World War II and subsequently coalesced through treaties bringing into existence the European Economic Community, EU, and Schengen Zone.

8. See Schippers and Grant (2016) on "musical ecosystems," by which the authors call attention to the social conditions necessary for the maintenance and survival of musical traditions.

9. *Our Music, Our World: Musical Associations, Wind Bands, and Local Communities (1880–2018)*, FCT: PTDC/CPC-MMU/ 5720/2014, Maria Rosário do Pestana, INET-md Universidade de Aveiro.

10. Alfredo Pimenta's *Em Defesa de Portugalidade* (1947) gave impetus to the concept of "portugalidade." The Estado Novo used portugalidade to promote an essentialized Portuguese identity (see Sousa 2017:287–312).

11. See the European Commission (n.d.a) website, "Associations."

12. For more on filármonicas and community-based music-making in Portugal, see Pestana et al. (2021).

13. Recordings of the band's original music and arrangements can be accessed on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/artist/55lLxyRDLd7fNkfDiNyP3i.

14. See Snyder (2022) on the alternative brass band movement of Rio de Janeiro with which Farra has collaborated, known there as *neofanfarrismo*, or "neo-brass bandism."

15. The point of this citation is not to open a debate considered elsewhere about Portugal's own position in relation to "the West" but to highlight the band's dynamic relation to global trends, distinct from a model of globalization in which communities adapt to homogenized global culture leaving behind traditional lifeways.

16. Moniz was a member of the mesa for close to a decade, serving as president from 2016–2018.

17. By intercultural, we refer to engagements between culturally distinct groups that forge novel cultural practices and identities. The contemporary integrationist EU-era Europe is thus distinct from a previously multinational Europe in which national representatives acted primarily as synecdoche of the nation. While Bohlman contextualizes the national/European tension within a much longer history, he argues that the post-Cold War, EU-integration context presents a demonstrably distinct manifestation of this tension, with heightened mobility and institutional integration through which "an alternative model of cultural cooperation" emerges with "conscious efforts to express the Europeanness of music" (2004:208).

18. The rise of illiberal, nationalist, right-wing movements in the EU since the late 2010s are in part a demagogic response to this liberal framework of EU integration. The EU now stands at a crossroads between maintaining this liberal outlook, fragmentation, and capture by the right.

19. The EU's stated humanitarian values fail to live up to contemporary migrant policies. The strength of the antimigrant backlash and its impact on European institutions arose in response to the 2015 "migrant crisis" in which the political center of the EU had initially celebrated Europe's willingness to resettle migrants. Projects that celebrated immigration have been funded as part of a cultural policy supporting Europe's openness to migrants, although EU voices increasingly reject earlier pro-migrant discourses.

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