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*a* BSENT CITY:  
INTERDISCIPLINARITY OF AN  
*URBAN FEELING BETWEEN THE*  
MUSIC AND THE BRAZILIAN  
IMIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present the result of scientific research in which music is understood as a social representation of conflicts experienced in the city. It proposes a transdisciplinary approach that adopts the complementarity between urban research field and musical analysis field, in which two examples of Brazilian Popular Music are evaluated. The social impacts of migration brought by the Brazilian urbanization processes in the decades of 1960-1970, are the themes of the songs identified by the survey. The musical analysis has established that the melodic and harmonic choices defined by composers intensify this speech in the lyrics and build the characterization of "urban feeling" that the songs represent. As a result, the article demonstrates that the studies on urban processes can be enriched from transdisciplinary research approaches.

KEYWORDS

Brazilian urbanization. Brazilian popular music. Migration. Social representation. Transdisciplinarity.

CIUDAD AUSENTE:  
INTERDISCIPLINARIDAD DE UN  
SENTIMIENTO URBANO ENTRE LA  
MUSICA Y LA MIGRACIÓN  
BRASILEÑA

CIDADE AUSENTE:  
INTERDISCIPLINARIDADE DE UM  
SENTIMENTO URBANO ENTRE A  
MÚSICA E A MIGRAÇÃO  
BRASILEIRA

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar el resultado de la investigación científica donde la música se entiende como una representación social de los conflictos experimentados en la ciudad. Se propone un enfoque transdisciplinario que adopta la complementariedad entre el campo de la investigación urbana y del campo de la investigación en análisis musical, en el que se evaluaron dos ejemplos de la música popular brasileña. Los impactos sociales de la migración, traídos por los procesos de urbanización en Brasil, en las décadas de 1960-1970, son los temas tratados en las canciones e identificados por la encuesta. El análisis musical ha establecido que las opciones melódicas y armónicas definidas por los compositores intensifican este discurso en las letras y construí la caracterización de “sensación urbana” que representan las canciones. Como resultado, el artículo demuestra que los estudios sobre los procesos urbanos pueden ser enriquecidos por enfoques de investigación transdisciplinaria.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Urbanización Brasileña. Música Popular Brasileña. Migración. Representación social. Transdisciplinarity.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar o resultado de uma pesquisa científica onde a música é entendida como representação social dos conflitos vividos na cidade. É proposta uma metodologia transdisciplinar que adota a complementaridade entre o campo de investigação de pesquisas urbanas e o campo de análise musical, pela qual são avaliados dois exemplares da música popular brasileira. Os impactos sociais da migração, trazidos pelos processos de urbanização brasileiros nas décadas de 1960-1970, são os temas tratados nas músicas e identificados pela pesquisa. A análise musical permitiu constatar que as escolhas melódicas e harmônicas definidas pelos compositores intensificam o discurso presente nas letras das músicas e constroem a caracterização do “sentimento urbano” que as canções representam. Como resultado, o artigo demonstra que os estudos sobre os processos urbanos podem ser enriquecidos a partir de abordagens transdisciplinares de investigação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Urbanização brasileira. Música popular brasileira. Migração. Representação social. Transdisciplinarity.

## INTRODUCTION

The city and its conflicts are subjects that permeate the academic field. However, the representation of the urban dynamics – beyond the scientific research – is not less deepened. Brazilian popular music is an example of this representation of conflicts experienced in the city, frequently in a sharp, poignant and enlightening way. The musical expression is a rich form of perception over the city residents' with the city as a physical and social space, representing conflicts, maladjustments, segregations and dilemmas experienced with the urban life. The Brazilian popular music can deeply reveal the "urban feeling" – here defined as the one felt from the citizen's relation with the city.

Inside the scientific field, according to Kowarick (2000) the study on the city is wide, multiple and includes multiple disciplines that "(...) *investigate and interpret this moving array of processes*" (KOWARICK, 2000, p. 119).

Converging with this understanding, this article is part of a scientific research in which the city is understood as a social product, and music is one of the means that represent its logic and dynamics. We extract from the urban daily life – the Brazilian popular music – the object of study about the city. The complementarity between the investigation field of the urban researches, and musical analysis form a methodological matrix, adopted for the deepen of the music representation as urban conflict, demanding the knowledge set of distinct disciplinary fields.

From the songs *Lamento Sertanejo* by Gilberto Gil and *Ponta de Areia* by Milton Nascimento this article approaches the "absent city", the term chosen to approach the feeling of conflict of migratory processes experienced by its residents. The methodology of musical analysis adopted in this study and its application in the song *Lamento Sertanejo* was partially published in a scientific event (BALDAM; LEONELLI, 2015) from the research funded by FAPESP – Research Foundation of São Paulo State (*Fundação de Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo*).<sup>1</sup>

After the presentation of the bibliographic reference used, the methodology applied will be exposed, interdisciplinary comprised and applied in the third part of the article. Finally, the obtained results will be discussed and the possible conclusions of this study.

## THE SUNG CITY, A SOCIAL REPRESENTATION

Guareschi (2000) proposes a methodological reference for research on social representations. He highlights that social representations present themselves through different modes and various means. The modes are related to the aspects of the form, model and method through which the social representation is exposed (habits, costumes, formal and informal communication). By means, we understand the channel through which the social representation reaches its receptor. The author mentions the images, the writs, the sounds and the gestures as means of the social representation (GUARESCHI, 2000, p. 253). Incorporating this methodology, the social

representation investigated in this research as the popular music as mean, intermediated by the mode of informal communication.

The popular music is studied as social representation has also taken place in the discussions on methodology of history teaching. According to Abud (2005) the popular music reveals the record of the daily life, "(...) *the social representations of different authors and singers will be tools in the transformation of spontaneous concepts into scientific concepts (...)*" (ABUD, 2005, p. 309).

Dialoging more directly with this article, Silva (2005, 2011) presents reference studies regarding the subject of urbanization in the popular Brazilian music. The urbanization process in the city of São Paulo in the years 1951-1969 is demonstrated through the musical analysis that the author makes on samba songs from São Paulo. Subjects as housing crisis, the construction process of slum areas and the symbolic dimension of the verticalization of the city were sung in samba songs from São Paulo and studies by Silva (2005). But it was the residents' rootlessness as effect of the urban development that brings the most striking mark present in the subject of the songs of this period.

The urban feeling analyzed by Silva (2011) is portrayed from the look of the less fortunate in the metropolis. The author approaches the urbanization as social and cultural production, and also economic and political, warning that the social history of urbanization is little investigated from the concrete experiences of appropriation of popular spaces.

Silva (2011) uses as one of the study elements the semiotic analysis of the samba songs, extracting the juice of the representation of conflicts experienced. The urban perception of the low-income groups in the city is expressed through melody and harmony (BALDAM; LEONELLI, 2015), building what Thompson (1987, apud Silva, 2011, p. 1) calls the "*history of urbanization from below.*"

The urban feeling portrayed in the popular Brazilian music is one of the representation forms of the reality of urban conflicts. The contextualization of the compositions are keys that reveal how the authors and the singers represent a time and a society. They reveal characters, difficulties, disputes, hopes, feelings, territories, conflicts and dynamics of the production and reproduction of the urban space. For Tatit (2004) *the singing was always a potentialized dimension of the speaking* (TATIT, 2004 apud ABUD, 2005 p. 313).

## METHODOLOGY

Firstly, as object of study, two popular Brazilian songs were chosen, in which it was possible to identify the social representations of the urban conflicts brought by the migration. The chosen songs were: 1) *Lamento Sertanejo*<sup>2</sup>, launched in 1975 by Gilberto Gil and 2) *Ponta de Areia*, by Milton Nascimento and Fernando Brant in 1974. The methodology for the analysis of the song as social representation of the migration impacts was conducted with the following steps: a) analysis of the lyrics, b) analysis of the melody, harmony and musical semiotics; c) contextualization of the migratory processes with the scientific bibliography; d) discussion of the urban feeling brought by the migration and represented by the chosen songs.

<sup>2</sup>The musical analysis of *Lamento Sertanejo* was already presented in scientific congress aiming to validate the methodology applied in the research project on the representation of urban conflicts.

For the application of the methodology, it is necessary to clarify – even superficially – the concepts that were used: harmony and melody. Harmony refers to the set of chords chosen for the composition of the song, comprising the harmonic field. The melody, usually performed by the singer, is the aspect that gives the identity of the song, additionally it is the closest aspect to the listener (BALDAM; LEONELLI, 2015).

### LAMENTO SERTANEJO: THE ABSENCE BY THE MEMORY

*Lamento Sertanejo* was written by Gilberto Gil and Dominginhos, launched by Gil in 1975 in the album *Refazenda*. Both composers of the song were born in Northeast Brazil and they consolidated their careers in both Brazil and abroad. Therefore, the subject of the absence of the home town, absence of a particular culture is not strange to the work and life of both musicians.

It is understood that the musical language holds both rich and submerge information in the lyrics and harmonies, therefore, they are unreachable at first hearing. The musical analysis presented up next allowed to observe which tools were used by the composers, so that the song expresses the feelings related to the urban and cultural displacement experienced by the migrant's character.

#### Analysis of the lyrics

For a complete analysis of the lyrics of *Lamento Sertanejo*, the transcription follows:

<i>Por ser de lá / Do sertão, lá do cerrado</i>	<i>Because I am from there / from the backlands, the bushland</i>
<i>Lá do interior do mato / Da caatinga do roçado.</i>	<i>Out there, in the middle of the woods / From the bush of the fields</i>
<i>Eu quase não saio / Eu quase não tenho amigos</i>	<i>I barely go out / I barely have any friends</i>
<i>Eu quase que não consigo / Ficar na cidade sem viver contrariado.</i>	<i>I am barely able to stay in the city / Without living in contradiction</i>
<i>Por ser de lá / Na certa por isso mesmo</i>	<i>Because I am from there / for sure that's why</i>
<i>Não gosto de cama mole / Não sei comer sem torresmo.</i>	<i>I don't like soft beds / I can't eat without pork rinds</i>
<i>Eu quase não falo / Eu quase não sei de nada</i>	<i>I barely speak / I barely know anything</i>
<i>Sou como rês desgarrada / Nessa multidão boiada caminhando a esmo.</i> (GIL; MORAIS, c1975)	<i>I am like stray head of cattle / in this crowd, herd walking aimlessly (GIL; MORAIS, c1975 - tradução livre do autor)</i>

When writing the lyrics of Dominginhos' song, Gilberto Gil resorts to simple phonemes and meanings, because the greater function of the popular music is communication. Therefore, the lyrics of *Lamento Sertanejo* is quite simple and easy to understand. However, after a deep reading, small details

indicate how the composer thinks and expresses the adverse situation, and which tools he has in his musical grammar for that matter.

The song begins identifying a character by its space and still confirming its belonging to that space. *"Because I am from there / from the backlands, the bushland / Out there, in the middle of the woods / From the bush of the fields"*, are the lines that connect the character to a distant place, for both the adjunct *"there"* and the meaning connoted to *"backlands"*, *"bushlands"*, *"middle"* and *"woods"*, normally used as reference to distant places. In these first verses the composer sets the character away from its original place.

After identifying the habitat, the composer illustrates the character's behavior by setting it in a new place, in an adverse way, in a situation of non-belonging: *"I barely go out / I barely have any friends/ I am barely able to stay in the city / Without living in contradiction"*. The character dislocated from its origin is translated into restrict, uncomfortable, afflicting behaviors, a fact that Gilberto Gil illustrates by using negative words to refer to the city.

<sup>3</sup>Musical notation: Gm.

It is important for the composer to observe that the character is dislocated, therefore the following lines confirm its distant origin, and also present cultural elements that no longer apply to the city: *"Because I am from there / for sure that's why / I don't like soft beds / I can't eat without pork rinds."*

In the last lines, the idea of denying related to the city is retaken *"I barely speak / I barely know anything"*; the character's displacement is confirmed again, making a reference to words of the origin place, as *"I am like stray head of cattle / in this crowd, herd walking aimlessly"*.

As main element written in the lyrics of *Lamento Sertanejo*, the dual game of the two places is noted: origin and destiny. In the last, the character feels oppressed by the impossibility of concreting its culture and live away from its belonging bounds.

### Analysis of the melody, harmony and musical semiotics

The analysis of the melody, harmony and musical semiotics offers new elements that complement and corroborate the indications already made in the lyrics analysis.

The dual game between the original and current places, presented in the lyrics, shows in the instrumentalization and harmony of the song. *Lamento Sertanejo* brings using an artifice common to the blues, the question-and-answer. While an instrument plays, while it *"responds"* the other also waits. While this dynamic happens, the dual game gains another layer when adds to the sound of the guitar, the sound of the accordion: the last is typical from the Northeast and the other is typical from the American blues. This musical duality is also expressed in another moment. For each song there is an harmonic field, which roughly corresponds to the possible chords for that song. *Lamento Sertanejo* is built in the G Minor<sup>3</sup> harmonic field, and all its blues dynamic follows this rule. However, a chord that does not belong to this harmonic field is inserted in the song, which is E minor flatted fifth that, not by coincidence, is a chord typical from the northeastern *baião* (it can be heard during the second line: *"from the backlands, the bushland"*, for

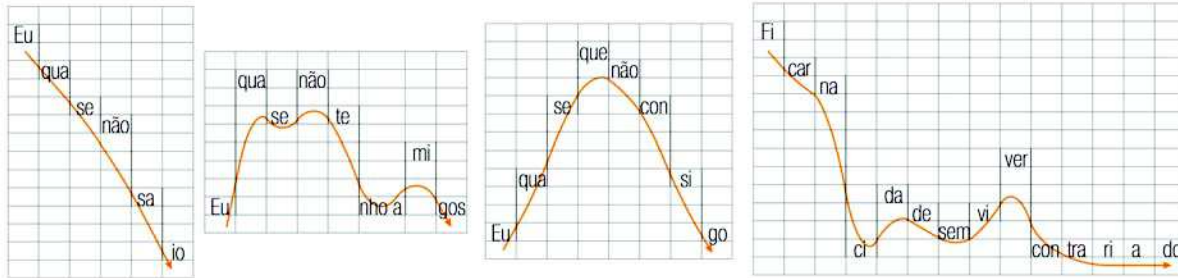


Figure 1: Semiotic analysis of an excerpt of *Lamento Sertanejo*. Source: BALDAM, LEONELLI, 2015.

<sup>4</sup>The melody of a song is a sequence of notes usually performed by the singer, in the case of a song, or by an instrument in the foreground, in the case of an instrumental music. The way that this sequence is built can set a linear, ascendant or descendent melody. It is linear when the same note is played consecutively; it is ascendant when the sequence starts with a specific note and then a higher one. Therefore, if we consider the notes C, D, E, F, G, A and B as a sequence that starts from the lowest note to the highest, one example of linear melody would be composed by the E note played several times; an example of ascending melody would be composed by the notes D, F, G and B; an example of descending melody would be composed by the notes G, D and C.

<sup>5</sup>In *Out there, in the middle of the woods*, although the melody implements an ascending movement, the harmony does a descending movement, setting up a counterpoint. This musical element connotes separation and distance to the song.

example). Similarly to the instruments that follow a specific harmonic field, the scales of the instruments and the melody also do the same. In general, *Lamento Sertanejo* uses pentatonic scales, very common in the blues, however, are also inserted in “dislocated” scales, as observed in the “*I’m like stray head of cattle*” vocal melody, in which the composer uses a scale typical of the *baião*. Once again, the composer wants to make the dual game clear, as well as the displacement experienced by the character, using for this objective, the musical instruments, scales and chords typical from the *baião* and blues.

Luis Tatit (2002) proposes a graphic model for analysis of the musical melody and its relation to the lyrics, the musical semiotics. Below there are some lines of *Lamento Sertanejo* with this method applied.

From these graphic representations, it is possible to visualize the melodic directions chosen by the composer, which can be ascendant, descendent or linear<sup>4</sup>. The musical semiotic analysis of *Lamento Sertanejo* points out two main characteristics: the option for descendent movements<sup>5</sup> and the great melodic amplitude. Descendent movements are related to sadness, while a melodic amplitude evidences the distance, by using very low notes and then very high notes.

The song, filled with elements like these, has the function to create a sonorous environment where the narrative develops itself. This environment is placed in a cultural, physical and almost visual space. Therefore, the composition of the lyrics, harmony and melody compose a picture of a scene, and draws on its vocabulary, in this case, in order to highlight certain points of the story or certain qualities, whether they are spatial, sensorial or ideological. For this example, the composer considered the Brazilian migrant’s situation, while displaced from its culture and uncappable of fitting in the new context, in a piece of sensory dimension.

It is noteworthy that Gilberto Gil is recognized by his approximation to the pop music in the sense of identifying in the popular music a mean of communication. In the words of the composer of *Lamento Sertanejo* himself:

*Above all, the popular music has been the chant that means only what life is.*  
(GIL, 1969, p. 36)

### The sides of Brazilian migration in the context of *Lamento Sertanejo*

The demographic studies on the Brazilian urbanization sharply highlight the 60's as an inflection point of the population, in which the urban residents overcame the ones from the country (BRITO, 2006; MATOS, 2012; SANTOS, 1996). The urbanization index in the 60's was 45.52% and raises to 56.80% in the 70's (SANTOS, 1996, p. 29). In this process, the migratory movements had a relevant role.

Brito and Souza (2005) and Brito (2006) demonstrate that this process was intense and fast, comprised by a triad: urbanization, urban concentration and internal migrations. The demographic dynamics presented high growth rates and intense populational displacement, as follows:

*Only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the urban population went from 19 million to 138 million, it was multiplied 7.3 times, with a 4.1% average rate of annual growth. This means that every year, in average, more than 2.3 million residents were added to the urban population. This enormous transformation of the Brazilian society had as one of its main vectors the great expansion of the internal migrations. They were the greater bond between the structural changes faced by society and economy and the acceleration of the urbanization process (...). However, the greater part of the demographic urban growth, between 1960 and 1980, was due to the intense migratory flow from the country to the city. Only in 1960 and the late 80's it is estimated that almost 43 million people came from the country to the city (...)* (BRITO, 2006, p. 222).

Additionally to the demographic data, Brito (2006) comments the migrant's difficulties to fit the cities that demanded workforce, as facing the xenophobia outbursts, the social tragedies and the difficulties of adaptation to the destination places. This is the context of the migratory movements and the urbanization represented by the song *Lamento Sertanejo*.

### PONTA DE AREIA: ABSENCE BY OBLIVION

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought to the popular a set of aspects. Chopin and Debussy met with Heitor Villa-Lobos and Dorival Caymmi, the African rhythms joined the harmonies and melodies of the European music, the urbanity becomes a figure frequently portrayed. The technological innovations, the industrialization, the dissemination of communication means and the growing urbanization allowed the cultural elements, once distant, to found each other, mix and shape something new. In Brazil, Tom Jobim, Baden Powell, João Gilberto were some of the ones who were able to condense this feeling of the moment in the form of music (AMARAL, 2013).

According to Amaral (2013), Milton brings in his musical construction Miles Davis, Tom Jobim, Bill Evans, The Beatles and João Gilberto, a mixture bounded by Milton's sensibility and inevitably shaped by Brazil's political history, going from the developmentalism of Kubitchek's government, the modern architecture of Pampulha and the 1964 coup d'état. As Chico Amaral stated: "For someone like Milton Nascimento to arise, there must be a fertile environment, which Brazil was perfectly capable of producing, at least until that moment" (AMARAL, 2013, p. 67).



### Analysis of the lyrics

Even though *Ponta de Areia* was a song by Milton Nascimento, it was written by Fernando Brant. Next, there is the complete lyrics of the song.

<i>Ponta de areia, ponto final / da Bahia- Minas, estrada natural</i>	<i>Ponta de Areia, final stop / of Bahia- Minas, natural road</i>
<i>Que ligava Minas ao porto, ao mar / Caminho de ferro mandaram arrancar</i>	<i>Which connected Minas to the harbor, to the sea / railway told to rip off</i>
<i>Velho maquinista com seu boné / Lembra o povo alegre que vinha cortejar</i>	<i>Old machinist with his hat / Remember the happy people that came to woo</i>
<i>Maria fumaça não canta mais / Para moças, flores, janelas e quintais</i>	<i>Maria fumaça doesn't sing anymore / To ladies, flowers, windows and backyards</i>
<i>Na praça vazia um grito, um oi / Casas esquecidas, viúvas nos portais (NASCIMENTO; BRANT, c1975)</i>	<i>In the empty square a scream, a hello / Forgotten houses, widows in the portals (NASCIMENTO; BRANT, c1975 - tradução livre do autor)</i>

Brant begins the song identifying the portrayed object. The railroad that connected North Minas Gerais to South Bahia. Particularly, the author chooses to use the name of the end point of the railroad, *Ponta de Areia*; the end, the emptiness and the absence are the main subjects of this song. In the lines "*Which connected Minas to the harbor, to the sea / railway told to rip off*" it is possible to observe two important elements in the narrative. First, we have the interruption of the railroad. "*Minas to the harbor, to the sea*" establishes the path, while *connected* interrupts it; "*railway told to rip off*" highlights the absent nature of the railroad. Second, from this moment the song uses only lines in the past tense or those which remind the absence, indicating that the scenes are conducted by the memory, a time that no longer exists.

When Brant describes people in this scenario, he firstly places the character of the passage (the machinist) and the static character (the people). The line "*Remember the happy people that came to woo*" is especially important because it shows that the real subject of the song are the relations established from the train that, in this case, are portrayed as both festive and extinct.

From "*To ladies, flowers, windows and backyards*", Milton subjectively describes the space left by the absent activity of the train. "*Empty square*", "*forgotten houses*" and "*widows*" are elements that portray the absence, the emptiness and the withdraw.

The scenes described by Brant develop a sepia tone when portraying the interruption of the dynamics that were there before. For this purpose, he uses as artifices the verbs in the past tense, verbs and nouns that remind the absence and uses a simple narrative built as local presentation of the characters and the problem.

### Analysis of the Melody, Harmony and Semiotics

After the analysis of Fernando Brant's lyrics, the analysis of the melody, semiotics, composed by Milton Nascimento, offer new complementary data.

The melody of *Ponta de Areia* is precise. Every line has twelve syllables, that provide the constant rhythm for the melody; and still, the drawing of the

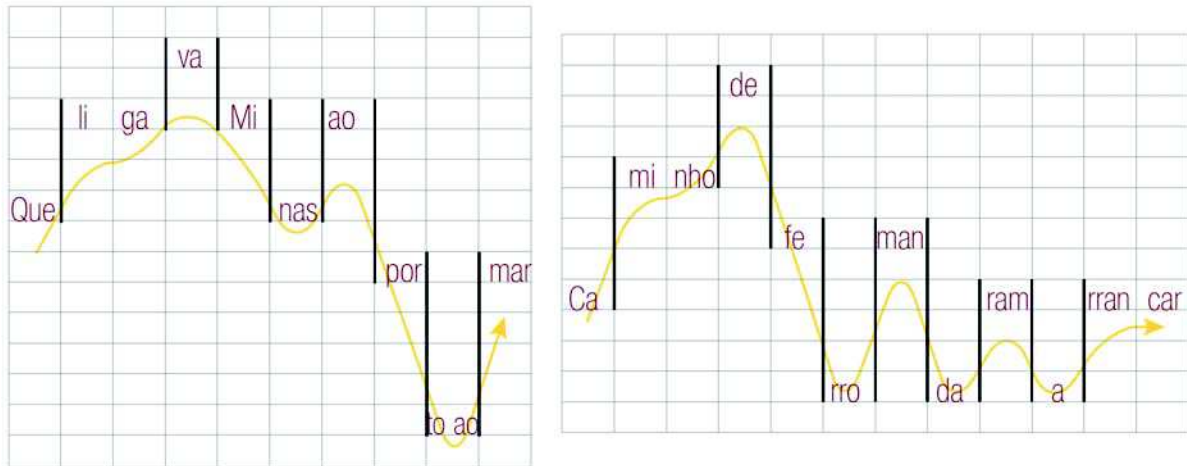


Figure 2: Semiotic analysis of an excerpt of *Ponta de Areia*. Elaborated by Gisela Cunha Viana Leonelli, Rafael Baldam

melody is the same in every line, only with slight variations. The diagram below illustrates two lines of the song according to the scheme of semiotic analysis proposed by Tatit (2002):

The analysis emphasizes that the musical elements identified in *Ponta de Areia* are a result of a deliberate choice, not random. Therefore, it validates the idea that the song can be a result of an effective communication instrument.

The harmony of *Ponta de Areia* adds two information that complement its musical analysis. First, in the beginning of the song, the percussion mimics the movement of a train, using bells, and then the children's choir mimics the cortege described in the lyrics: "Remember the happy people that came to woo". Second, the song is about the past, the actions and images described in no longer exist, but in the memory. The harmonic choices of this song illustrate precisely this ethereal characteristic of the memory transformed into image. For this purpose, Milton uses the B flat<sup>6</sup> pentatonic scale, but does not use the two notes that will create the tension in the melody, the E flat and the A<sup>7</sup>. With that, the song stands over an intermediate landscape, it is not directed to the regret neither to the exaltation, but remains aerial and distant<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup>Musical notation: Bb

<sup>7</sup>Musical notation: EbeA

<sup>8</sup>This choice can be observed in Debussy, in compositions such as *Pagodes* and *La Cathédrale Engloutie*.

## THE FORGOTTEN CITIES: THE ABANDONMENT OF PEOPLE WHO LEFT AND NO LONGER WILL ARRIVE

<i>Anda, minha gente / Vem depressa, na estação / Pra ver o trem / Chegar</i>	<i>Come on people / Hurry to the station / to see the train / Arrive</i>
<i>É dia de festa / E a cidade se enfeita para ver / O trem</i>	<i>It's party day / And the city adorns itself to see / the train</i>
<i>Quem é bravo, fica manso / Quem é triste, se alegre / E olha o trem</i>	<i>Who is angry, becomes gentle / Who is sad, cheers up / and look the train</i>
<i>Velho, moço e criança / Todo mundo vem correndo / Para ver / Rever gente que partiu</i>	<i>Old people, young man and child / Everyone come running / To see / Review people that left</i>
<i>Pensando um dia em voltar / Enfim, voltou / No trem / E voltou contando histórias</i>	<i>Thinking about going back someday / Finally, went back / In the train / And came back telling stories</i>

*De uma terra tão distante do mar / Vem / From a land so far away from the sea /  
trazendo esperança para quem / quer / Come bringing hope to who / Wants / In  
Nessa terra se encontrar / E o trem... / this land found yourself / And the  
Gente se abraçando / Gente rindo / train... / People hugging / People  
Alegria que chegou / No trem laughing / Joy that arrived / In the train  
(Três Pontas; NASCIMENTO, 1967) (Três Pontas; NASCIMENTO, 1967 -  
tradução livre do autor)*

In the song *Três Pontas*, launched eight years before *Ponta de Areia*, Milton already presented references to the railway landscape and activities related to it. The reporter Fernando Brant, Milton's partner in many compositions<sup>9</sup> is also from Minas Gerais, wrote the lyrics of *Ponta de Areia* after a work travel going through the old railroad from Bahia to Minas. Such story was published in the journal *O Cruzeiro*, in a 1972 edition. Here are two excerpts of his text:

*D. Rosaria was moved to tears when speaking about the railroad: "Machine is made to work and machinist is made to die", said her husband, Joaquim Bitu, the most famous and beloved machinist of the region, back in the time. She remembers the whistle of the train coming from far away, and then gloriously contouring the Ponta de Areia square (suburb of Caravelas, Bahia), loaded with peroba and jacarandá logs, the husband waved as he passes in front of his house. Today it has been 18 years Joaquim (Bitu) Nunes died, and 7 since the Bahia-Minas railway was extinct. Rosaura, 73 years, receives a Cr\$ 150.00 pension from the Institute and dreams with the joy of living until the machines are back rattling above the railway tracks, and with them, her sons who work in other branches. (...) Thousands of stories like this are told along the abandoned bed of the old Bahia-Minas, that began to be built in the time of the Empire and lives until April 1966. Connecting Araçuaí (MG) to Ponta de Areia, this railway had a great social and economic importance for the valleys of Minas*

*Gerais, Mucuri and Jequitinhonha and for the South Bahia. Teófilo Otoni, a man with a rare insight, said in 1857 "as soon as the agricultural products and the commerce grow in the Mucuri valley and its surroundings, Caravelas will be our emporium of the foreign commerce, our customs and our Rio de Janeiro." (VILELA, 1980, p. 36)*

Three years after this article, Milton releases *Ponta de Areia*. The Brant's report states that seven years after the railway shutdown, its legacy is lack of jobs and regards. In a report to the Minas Estate news portal (2015), Antônio Lima Silva, 80 years old, says: "After the Bahiaminas<sup>10</sup> end, the job disappeared. The people went to other places" (LOBATO, 2015). Manoel, dweller of Araçuaí, a Minas Gerais' city where the train started its route, puts: "We don't have a refrigerator, hot shower water and television because the light didn't arrive in our home", putting in evidence that the destiny of a city that had its major economic activity extinct, is the absence of quality life. (LOBATO, 2015)

<sup>9</sup>Travessia, Para Lennon e McCartney, Ao que vai nascer, Escravos de Jó, Maria Maria and Canção da América are some examples of compositions by Fernando Brant and Milton Nascimento.

<sup>10</sup>Way that the users and workers of the railway referred to it.

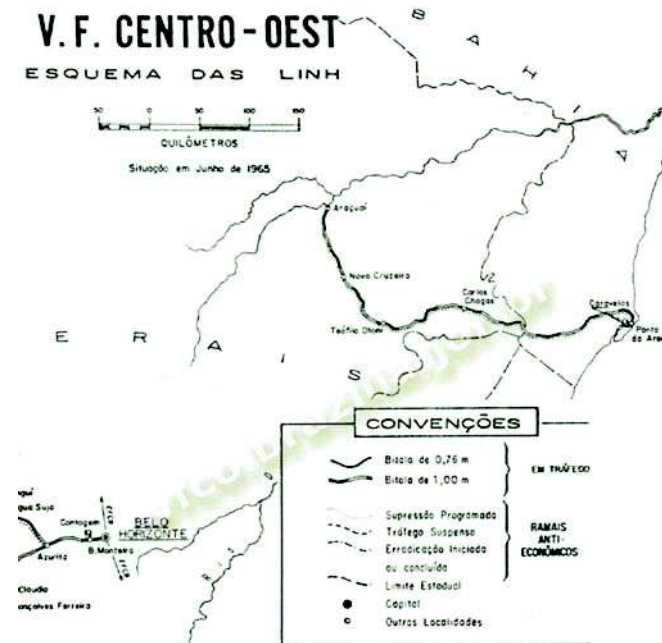


Figure 3: Illustrative picture of the Bahia-Minas railway path. Source: Viação Férrea Centro Oeste

The Maria Fumaça drained the agricultural production of the cities of its route, allowed the traffic of products and raw material between the cities and internationally, it moved the economy. From 1935 to 1944, for example, the volume in the freight cars went from 76,874 tons to 174,161 tons (an increase of 126%). The total passengers increased on a larger scale in a smaller period, from 51.3 thousand people in 1935 to 373 thousand men and women in 1940 (an increase of 627%). This would be the last moment of life of the railway (ASSIS, 1985).

According to Assis (1985), the deactivation of the railway in 1966 can be related to the intense construction of roads in the military government, precluding the maintenance of that mean of transportation.

Every city present in the path of the Bahia-Minas experienced a decrease in their economy, urban structure and urban life. The city Carlos Chagas in Minas Gerais had a decrease of 16.2 thousand residents after the deactivation of the *Maria Fumaça*; in Caravelas, Bahia, the end point of the railroad, the population decreased from 31.1 thousand to 10 thousand in one year. The scenario left are ruined stations and empty spaces (ASSIS, 1985).

During the analysis of *Ponta de Areia*, it was observed that the song presents concrete nouns to characterize the described scene: road, railway, people, *maria fumaça*, ladies, flowers, windows, yards, squares, houses and portals. There is the main idea of absence, associated to the mentioned nouns, creating lines like: “*railway told to rip off*”, “*Maria fumaça doesn’t sing anymore*”, “*Forgotten houses, widows in the portals*”.

Milton’s song represents the absence in the form of passage, travel, depart, comings and goings, meetings and separations. Therefore, the environment of the railroad, the travel is an agent of the absence to the one who goes and to the one who stays. With that, the city shelters this dynamic fades, it forgets and it is forgotten.

*Ponta de Areia* works with this subject, that can be very dense, in a simple way, starting with easily imaginable scenes and frequently recognizable to the listener, creating a certain proximity between the composer, the song and its receptor. There are no complex words or semantic constructions; there is an emotional and sensible chant. These choices make Milton’s song experience, a personal scene for each one who listens to it.

## RESULTS

From an investigation approach that searched for the approximation between the music and the urban studies, it was possible to identify convergence aspects that contribute to the decision, comprehension and understanding of the urbanization processes, especially the social impacts brought by the migration.

The songs *Lamento Sertanejo* and *Ponta de Areia* intensely portray the various situations of migratory processes: the first is the absence brought by the memory and the distance; the second is the absence because of the oblivion and abandonment. At first, this “urban feeling” portrayed by the songs seems

to be an essential result because of the lyrics. However, the research showed through the methodology of analysis of musical semiotics, that melodic and harmonic choices of the compositions – whether they are intuitive or purposeful – create a sensory and hearing speech that structure the compositions. Therefore, the social representation of the “urban feeling” is built beyond the lyrics, but also by the melodic and harmonic choices.

The research meets the understanding of Kowarick (2000) demonstrating that the study on the city can be wide and multiple; in this case in a transdisciplinary attempt. The social representation through the Brazilian popular music can offer other approaches and reading on the urbanization process of our country.

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