

Bar Semente (Rio de Janeiro) and Tejo Bar (Lisbon): Setting the stage for the renovation of rooted cultural traditions

Bar Semente (Rio de Janeiro) e Tejo Bar (Lisboa): assegurar a renovação de tradições culturais enraizadas

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Abstract

The article proposes a reflection on artistic-cultural entrepreneurship, focusing on the management of artistic and relational heritage in entrepreneurship efforts related to music. This reflection is based on case studies of two musical ventures: Bar Semente, located in Rio de Janeiro's Lapa district, and Tejo Bar, from Lisbon's Alfama. Both are on the periphery of the mainstream cultural industry and rooted in territories with a rich cultural, historical and touristic heritage. Due to their organic relationship with their surroundings, both venues have themselves become heritage assets and tourist attractions, but this process has also turned them into "targets" for predatory tourist practices that tend to create "commodified" versions of the informal and spontaneous interactions that made them famous. The paper focuses on the ways in which the entrepreneurs were able to manage the artistic and relational heritage of each place, analyzing their practices through the lens of the Effectuation approach and identifying patterns that may be useful not only for the analysis of similar cases, but also to the development of a broader conceptual understanding of how artistic endeavors can change the image and the identity of territories that already have a strongly established cultural heritage.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, cultural and relational heritage, Effectuation, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon.

Resumo

O artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre o empreendedorismo artístico-cultural, com foco na gestão do patrimônio artístico e relacional em atividades empreendedoras relacionadas com a música. Esta reflexão baseia-se nos estudos de caso de dois empreendimentos musicais: o Bar Semente, localizado na Lapa, no Rio de Janeiro, e o Tejo Bar, no bairro da Alfama, em Lisboa. Ambos estão na periferia da indústria cultural dominante e enraizados em territórios com um rico patrimônio cultural, histórico e turístico. Devido à sua relação orgânica com o entorno, ambos tornaram-se eles mesmos bens patrimoniais e atrações turísticas, mas este processo também os transformou em 'alvos' para práticas turísticas predatórias que tendem a criar versões 'mercantilizadas' das interações informais e espontâneas que os tornaram famosos. O artigo concentra-se nas estratégias através das quais os empreendedores foram capazes de gerir o patrimônio artístico e relacional de cada lugar, analisando as suas práticas através da lente da abordagem da *Effectuation* e identificando padrões que podem ser úteis não só para a análise de casos semelhantes, mas também para o desenvolvimento de uma compreensão conceptual mais ampla de como empreendimentos artísticos podem mudar a imagem e a identidade de territórios que já têm um patrimônio cultural forte e amplamente reconhecido.

Palavras-chave: empreendedorismo, patrimônio cultural e relacional, *Effectuation*, Rio de Janeiro, Lisboa.

1. Introduction

Music has a strong presence in the culture of cities, and live music – from formal presentations to more informal gatherings – usually creates the opportunity for encounters not only between musicians and the public, but also between locals, tourists and migrants. In this sense, music venues may be relational spaces for *glocal* experiences (Wood et al., 2007), especially when the space is small enough to allow for a more direct and personal engagement between artists, the public and the owners/promoters of the event. In these cases, a music venue may cause the fusion of culture and heritage with entrepreneurship (Cohen, 2012; 2013; Van der Hoven & Hitters, 2020).

This paper proposes a reflection on artistic and cultural entrepreneurship and its relationship with immaterial and relational heritage management, building on the analysis of two case studies: Bar Semente, in Rio de Janeiro's Lapa neighbourhood, and Tejo Bar, from Lisbon's Alfama. Both are on the periphery of the mainstream cultural industry and rooted in territories with a rich cultural, historical and touristic heritage. Due to their organic relationship with their surroundings, both venues have themselves become heritage assets and tourist attractions, but this process has also turned them into 'targets' for predatory tourist practices that tend to create 'commodified' versions of the informal and spontaneous interactions that made them famous. The paper focuses on the ways in which the entrepreneurs were able to manage the artistic and relational heritage of each place, analyzing their practices through the lens of the Effectuation approach and identifying patterns that may be useful not only for the analysis of similar cases, but also to the development of a broader conceptual understanding of how artistic endeavors can change the image and the identity of territories that already have a strongly established cultural heritage.

Many scholars (Sarasvathy, 2001; 2008; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Steyaert, 2007; Garud et al., 2010; Hjorth, 2012; Garud & Giuliani, 2013) reaffirm that the entrepreneurial process is not limited to the relationship between the entrepreneur and the firm, understanding it as a collective activity that includes other fundamental dimensions. Following this idea, both case studies will be analyzed according to the Effectuation approach (Sarasvathy, 2001; 2008),

in which uncertainty, unpredictability and rootedness in local culture and practices are central to each entrepreneurial "journey. For effectuation, the entrepreneur's acts not necessarily according to a business plan, but most likely according to the resources that are available – who I am; what I know how to do; and whom I know – and to his/her ability to establish and sustain relationships. It is about creating a future and not trying to foresee it.

2. Effectuation logic of entrepreneurship

The logic behind the effectuation approach to entrepreneurship is based on the idea that each and every human endeavour involves the creation of something artificial – as defined by Herbert Simon, who was Sarasvathy's Ph.D. adviser:

The artificial world is centered precisely on this interface between the inner and outer environments; it is concerned with attaining goals by adapting the former to the latter. The proper study of those who are concerned with the artificial is the way in which that adaptation of means to environments is brought about – and central to that is the process of design itself (Simon, 1996, p. 57).

Therefore, the entrepreneurial activity is understood as a design process in which the entrepreneur uses all the resources that he or she can gather not only to shape – or reshape – its inner environment (firm), but also to intervene in the relationship between the inner and the outer environment (market) in a way that may facilitate the fulfilment of his or her goals. Of course, at first this may sound as common-sense – just a new name for a well-known phenomenon –, but the effectuation approach systematizes the findings from several empirical studies that mapped the heuristics used by hundreds of entrepreneurs that developed specific and situated responses to complex issues immersed in uncertain contexts (Sarasvathy, 2001; 2008; 2020; 2022). This is why Sarasvathy argues that effectual strategies are "useful when the future is unpredictable, goals are unclear, and the environment is driven by human action" (Sarasvathy, 2008, p.73).

Apart from empirical evidence and the overall reference to the cognitive science studies developed by Herbert Simon, effectuation is also based on the theory of bounded rationality in decision-making processes, in Knightian uncertainty (Knight, 1921) – when acknowledging ignorance regarding the future –, and in James March's exploration of playfulness and behavioral decision-making theory (March, 1971). Sarasvathy's doctoral dissertation explores the fundamental question of "How do firms come to be?" (1998) within her research, she introduces the concept of "effectuation," which is a novel approach to understanding the entrepreneurial process. Effectuation places the entrepreneur at the centre of a process marked by uncertainty, as they work to transform an idea into a tangible business (Sarasvathy, 2001; 2008). Her extensive research with entrepreneurs has resulted in the identification of five interconnected heuristics. These heuristics collectively form a systematic method for entrepreneurial action when dealing with an unpredictable future. Instead of relying on predictive actions, this approach centers on leveraging what is readily available and attainable for the entrepreneur. The five heuristic principals are:

1. Bird-in-hand – the entrepreneur starts with his/her means (who I am, what I know and whom I know) rather than setting clear goals and trying to predict opportunities.
2. Affordable-loss – instead of starting with financial calculations and projections of expected returns from the new project, the entrepreneur "bets" only what he/she is willing to lose - money, time, or effort.
3. Crazy-quilt – instead of focusing on planned partnerships, the entrepreneur works on different partnerships and alliances, without fixed criteria for selection. The entrepreneur allows many committed parties to participate in the venture with financial and non-financial resources.
4. Lemonade – the entrepreneur's ability to deal with surprises and turn both positive and negative contingencies into opportunities.
5. Pilot-in-the-plane – recognizing what is manageable or controllable and what is not, and keeping goals within the reach and scope of the entrepreneur.

Effectuation provides an alternative to the traditional models of business plans and market analysis, rooted in a "causal logic" characterized by systematic search and the prediction of opportunities (Sarasvathy, 2001; 2008). Although these models may provide useful tools for the design of businesses – and other activities – in fairly stable and predictable contexts, entrepreneurs are usually seeking to create new business models or even new markets, and are therefore obliged to work with a greater degree of uncertainty. In the logic of effectuation, the entrepreneur begins by selecting or acknowledging his or her means, resources and available contacts; and later, in a pragmatic perspective, experiments and tests the creation of opportunities and new market niches, considering the future as "makeable through human action" (Read et al., 2016, p. 2).

3. Bar Semente (Rio de Janeiro) and Tejo Bar (Lisbon)

The case studies selected for this paper share the following similarities (Yin, 2018):

1. Are artistic and cultural ventures in the music segment;
2. Have successful stories in niche markets;
3. Have a local and global relational heritage;
4. Are contemporary;
5. Have similar trajectories.

Data collection was conducted through a series of in-depth interviews made in 2021. The interviews were supplemented by digital media material, private and news reports, and included the founder(s) and key decision makers, who agreed to have their testimonies recorded and used for academic purposes. The cases were built on the theoretical reflection of action research, supported by the collection of situated personal actions and memories (Thiollent, 2018).

3.1. Bar Semente

For 25 years — since 1998 —, Semente was a reference for musicians, launching many new talents in Brazilian music, promoting innovation and expanding musical experimentation. The musical encounters and unexpected jam sessions promoted by the venue catalysed the creation of innovative performances, providing an experimental space for both emerging and well-established artists¹. The venue's intense cultural activity and promotion of new talents gave rise to the emergence of a "Semente generation" made up of musicians such as Yamandú Costa, Zé Paulo Becker, Teresa Cristina e Grupo Semente, Marcos Sacramento, Casuarina, Moyses Marques, Edu Krieger, Roberta Sá, among others, many of whom went on to develop successful national and international careers that renewed public interest in the cultural heritage of Lapa: "the national and international success of individual artists and the recognition of their origins in a particular local scene determine an increase in the circulation of certain images, which remain viable over time" (Bottà, 2008).

Semente became itself an international sensation. Reports about unpredicted jam sessions with Diana Krall's band, the Buena Vista Social Club, Sting, Lisa Minelli's band, Snarky Puppy, Madeleine Peyroux, Gogol Bordello, Dave Mathews and his band, Kurt Masur, Jeff Beck and many other artists drew the attention of newspapers, magazines, TV stations, filmmakers — and, of course, tourists — from all over the world.

In 2018, Semente closed its stage in Lapa, but its brand and identity is still present through the production of special concerts, music festivals, and other events. Recently, investors approached Semente for brand licensing.

A week after closing the Lapa headquarters, I was invited by Blue Note Rio to sign a brand partnership to bring converts to the stage of one of the most prestigious jazz clubs in the world. The club had opened in Rio a few months before. There have been many more such invitations, and the Semente brand is alive and well in Rio de Janeiro (A*).

Until 1998, Bar Semente was a natural food restaurant in the then degraded Lapa. The founder of Semente was a professor of statistics at Rio de Janeiro State University, she decided to buy the place, and music began to invade it. At first, there were informal and usually improvised performances, but these would soon coexist with concerts and jam sessions featuring celebrated musicians. These events began to attract different kinds of public to the neighbourhood, which despite its bohemian past — Lapa was at the core of Rio's cultural life in the early 20th century, witnessing and fomenting the development of music genres such as *samba* and *choro* — was by then highly degraded and completely excluded from the city's cultural scene.

*Entrepreneur A** moved from Porto Alegre to Rio de Janeiro to pursue a Master's degree at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and became a frequent client at Semente. In a few years she became a partner in a small business consulting company, and remained a faithful client until 2003, when Semente had to close its doors due to financial problems. A* steps in and leads a collective effort to reopen Semente, the *Comuna do Semente* (Semente's Commune). The Commune gathers musicians, patrons and friends in a collective financing effort that allows Semente to open once or twice a week. After three months, the success of the Commune fosters the idea to transform Semente into a viable business, and A* becomes the main entrepreneur of a new Semente. There was no business plan or alike.

In terms of business viability, it was clear from the start that the stage at Semente was too small, and that there was a need for expansion. The first solution was to take advantage of the fact that the nearby *Clube dos Democráticos*, which also housed live music presentations, had an empty slot on Friday night. Semente proposed a partnership that became the Semente da Música Brasileira project, which eventually became a music label. The two stages worked together: the small one at Semente and the big one at Democráticos. New artists and innovative performances were held at first on the small stage, and then taken to the big stage. Working in this manner, it became economically profitable to produce the music that characterized the Semente atmosphere. From November 2004 to 2010, great artists shared the stages with the new generation: Elza Soares, Moraes Moreira, Arlindo Cruz, Monarco, Walter

¹ Formal and informal guests included Marisa Monte, Arnaldo Antunes, Carlinhos Brown, Chico Buarque, João Bosco, Ney Matogrosso, Beth Carvalho, Hamilton de Holanda, Zé da Velha and Silvério Pontes, Alessandro Kramer, Nicolas Krassik, among others.

Alfaiate, among others. The resident band on Fridays at Democráticos was made up of Zé da Velha, Silvério, Zé Paulo, Semente ChoroJazz, Zé Renato, Roberta Sá and many others. It has been a new golden era in Lapa.

The duality of the stages was resolved in 2010, when a bigger house was rented next to the original Semente. From then on many things happened: apart from curating the daily shows, the entrepreneur carried out a number of projects focused in recording the music of the Semente generation; in 2010, Semente won the FINEP prize, promoted by Brazil's main development agency – part of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation; in 2014, Semente was chosen by the Municipality to produce an official book commemorating Rio's 450th anniversary, *Memória Afetiva do Botequim Carioca*; in 2015, Semente won the FUNARTE Award for Continuing Music Programming, promoted by the Ministry of Culture, as a recognition for the investment in independent and authorial music; in 2016, Semente was invited to be one of the stages of the Villa Lobos Festival, one of the oldest music festivals in Brazil, and organized the Festival Semente da Música Brasileira, with the participation of artists such as Yamandú Costa, Zé Paulo Becker, Guinga, Ney Matogrosso, Roberta Sá, Zé da Velha and Silvério Pontes, Arismar do Espírito Santo, among others.

In 2017, Semente had to close its doors again. Despite being an unquestionable artistic and cultural success, the venue could not endure the market shift provoked, among other factors, by the end of a cycle of local and external investments stimulated by large-scale events such as the 2014 World Cup, hosted by Brazil, and the 2016 Olympics, held in Rio de Janeiro.

In 2018, Semente launched the documentary *Semente da Música Brasileira*, co-produced by *Canal Brasil* and exhibited in Canal Brasil's TV channel and cinemas throughout Rio de Janeiro. In 2019, the documentary was screened at three film festivals, one national and two international – in India and Spain –, exporting and promoting the music made in the heart of Lapa to the world. During the pandemic, the entrepreneur won several awards, produced online festivals with great national and international musicians, and re-shaped the business model of Semente.

3.2. Tejo Bar

Tejo Bar has nothing to do with the other bars in Lisbon's Alfama district. The neighbourhood is famous for its relationship with traditional fado music, and many venues promote fado presentations for both locals and tourists. Tejo Bar, however, is a meeting place where several musicians who live in Lisbon – or are passing through - go after playing at other venues. The program is "random", because you never know who will show up to play. You don't clap at Tejo Bar, because it's on the first floor of a residential building; you rub your hands together, like in traditional *fado* performances. Everyone is invited to sing or play. A piano and other instruments are available for anyone to use, but many musicians bring their own. Suddenly a *fado* singer starts singing, a gypsy duo starts playing tango on violin and accordion, or musicians from different countries start playing Brazilian music, from Tropicália to *samba*, improvising together. At night, the musicians continue to play and occupy the square of the nearby *Igreja de Santo Estevão*, with its magnificent view of Lisbon.

When I went to work at the bar, I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know anything about bars, and I was learning, as apprentice. The person would come and say: I want to drink this; I want to drink that. I asked, "Do you know how to do it? So come in and make your own drink", and then I started watching and learning how to make it. But I knew how to make a caipirinha, and my caipirinha was the best in Lisbon. I gave the job to Sérgio, who was a person with a visual problem, and who would serve the drink and half of it would fall out of the glass. I think that's what made the Tejo (B*).

*Entrepreneur B** is from Rio Branco, the capital of Acre, a state in the Amazon region of Brazil. She moved to Lisbon in 1990. B* is a painter, had exhibitions in France and Switzerland, sold all her paintings and stopped painting because she thought she was not really a painter. In 2000, B* and Jorge Carlos, a writer, amateur guitarist and father to her daughter, decided to open Tejo Bar, a space for painting and poetry. The Tejo Bar was owned by two women who were giving it up.

Tejo Bar was not created intentionally, it happened in 2000. It was already an art space, but without movement. My partner and I, a musician, poet and writer, wanted an atelier, an extension of our living room, to receive friends. But it had to be self-sustaining. At that time, we were still surviving on our art (B*).

Between 2000 and 2010, the couple took over the Tejo Bar, which was initially supposed to be a painting studio. However, they soon bought percussion instruments for musicians to play, books with scores of Brazilian and *fado* music, canvases, and brushes for painting, etc. and a “movement” began. Musicians left their jobs and came to Tejo to play informally in a place where musicians could get together and meet other musicians.

We created the Tejo Bar and spent the nights working, painting and writing. And we worked on everything so that when people came, there was an artistic activity. And the movement started with the artists, the *fado* musicians who came and started playing, because they started interacting without any commitment, and people started coming to Tejo Bar because during those hours from 3am to 8am there were artistic activities. It's a small space, 33 square meters, and so it would fill up in the early hours of the morning and people would leave happy and go home and the next day it would be the same thing, and it would be in a loop. Tejo Bar was clandestine. And we sold our art. To do that, you had to serve drinks and foods, so I prepared the food at home because there is no kitchen in the space. And the drinks and the food paid for the expenses of the space (B*).

In ten years, The Tejo became an established meeting place. Musicians from all over the world came to Lisbon to play at the Tejo Bar.

We don't have partnerships with anyone. I take the risk of saying that it's one of the most unique places in Alfama. The Tejo Bar is self-sustaining. It sells prepared food and drinks. There is not a partnership with musicians. The artists come voluntarily. Because they like the space, and it has open arms to welcome them in (B*).

Between 2010 and 2015, B* was the only one in charge of Tejo Bar, after the departure of her partner. At that time, much was happening in Alfama, and B* needed to move on. But she didn't want to give up a space that she had worked hard to build and decided to get someone to manage it. In 2015, B* found someone who identified with the soul of the space, partnering with a Cape Verdean musician, also a regular, who already knew all the movements of the house and now coordinates the music. B* manages the food, the space and the accounts, because Tejo Bar survives by selling drinks and food.

There is really no programming at Tejo Bar. Every night is a surprise. There is no organization in Tejo Bar. It never existed and I don't know how it works because it never existed. People come and sometimes ask me what the program is tonight. I get embarrassed because I don't know. And I say, look, the musicians can come or not. And every day there is this surprise. Suddenly there is one musician, and suddenly six musicians. They come in with the flute, the guitar, the violin, the bass. And then this energy is created in the room. And then that group changes and another one comes in. I think sometimes people think it is organized, but Tejo Bar is not organized in that way. In that sense it doesn't have that organization (B*).

Like Semente, Tejo Bar also became internationally famous due to the presence of international musical stars. Madonna, who lived in Lisbon for two years, became a regular guest at Tejo Bar, drawings inspiration for her *Madame X* album and tour, and even hiring a musician who played at the bar during one of her visits.

Madonna was blocked from entering Tejo Bar. I told her we were closed and told her to go to the nearby Santo Estevão Church. Because of the noise, after a certain hour, we send the musicians to the church because it has a beautiful view, it is a belvedere, and they can play freely. So, the musicians leave the Tejo Bar and go to play in front of the church. And Madonna went there. Many times, Madonna was

sitting in her seat undisturbed and suddenly a singer appeared next door, singing, an instrumentalist, and she was surprised to find that in such a small space (B*).

During its trajectory, Tejo Bar has organized music festivals in many different places in Lisbon. A documentary has also been made about the experimental nights at Tejo. At the turn of 2019 to 2020, B* and her partner decided to finally establish a musical program for the Bar – but with the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan never came to fruition. Tejo Bar closed on March 12th, 2020, a few days before the official governmental order. In September 2020, the bar reopened, but it had to meet a number of new standards:

We couldn't have more than ten people in the room, so we had to put up acrylic to separate the musicians from the audience. The Tejo Bar became an aquarium. It was a very tight operation. In January 2021, after all these expenses, we went back to the confinement. The reward is that we think about much we need this space. We are living the uncertainty. Now it is difficult to plan, to try to find a new way to live this creativity (B*).

Tejo Bar reopened its doors after the pandemic.

4. Final considerations

The paper aims to prove that, in both case studies of artistic-cultural entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurs applied decision-making processes based on the effectuation approach – and that this approach was much more adequate to their goals and their contexts than traditional, 'causal' approaches could ever be. As listed below, the similarities between the cases may point toward a set of characteristics that may be common to other artistic-cultural endeavours:

- i. No case began, or relied, on anything like a business plan or market analysis. Each began, and it could be argued that each could only have begun, as a sort of experiment, an ambition or a sense of opportunity given very specific circumstances;
- ii. Both cases followed a path that started with "let's see where this leads" as a situational response to the means available or that could be made available;
- iii. This would admit a more general formulation: both the means and the context were taken as challenges to be met. The peculiarities of each context and contingency were more relevant to the decision-making process than any preconceived conceptions;
- iv. The relational networks with musicians were at the core of the innovative nature of both cases, shaping their opportunities and generating glocal ventures;
- v. Both entrepreneurs acted as "effectual pilots" aware only of the type of bird they were holding before boarding the plane and attempting to take off on the runway of experimentation with affordable loss;
- vi. The whole flight thereafter was a discovery: of resources that emerged from crazy-quilting, of challenges that demanded the making of lemonades. Throughout, what they could control was how they would respond to each context, and not the context itself;
- vii. The two cases present instances of viable piloting – viable in terms of allowing for survival beyond the initial threshold of affordable-loss –, becoming a series of challenges that propitiated the discovery of resources and alternatives that shaped "good-enough" responses.

These similar characteristics point towards a way of acting that surely contradicts the classic patterns of business performance and strict economic rationality, as they are rooted not in business plans but in a collective act – the entrepreneur and his/her network – that gives specific responses to specific environmental conditions. These networks, which include economic, non-economic, and informal relations and specifics of the business, contain the source of motivation for cultural entrepreneurs and the differentiation of development that leads to value creation.

According to Bottà (2008, p. 309), "the image conveyed by local music scenes is often dissimilar to the one the municipality is trying to give, and its effects seem to be more durable. This is due to the chances, provided by popular music, to adopt places on the textual, visual, and aural levels and by the

significance allotted to them by circulation". The examples studied in this paper suggest that the generation of this sort of positive externalities, which encompasses social and economic benefits that are not usually internalized by the private sector, can be fostered through a combination of uncertainty and non-driven objectives. These are consistent with the two core dimensions of Goodman's 'worldmaking' approach: "pluralism of worlds" and "making the improbable" (Goodman, 1978; Putnam, 1979). In this sense, Semente and Tejo can provide valuable insights into how artistic and cultural entrepreneurship promotes the creation and management of a new glocal artistic heritage, or how it becomes an enticing element for tourism in urban environments. Consequently, this may help public policy makers to focus their attention on the specific dynamics of artistic and cultural entrepreneurship (Ross, 2017) and their possible interactions not only with tourism (Barbieri, Mahoney, 2010), but also with the affirmation and renovation of local identities (Bottà, 2008).

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